BEDTIME IN A BOX: A WORTHY PARENT INTERVENTION TO ADDRESS THE SCHOOL READINESS OF PRESCHOOLERS RESIDING IN AN URBAN COMMUNITY

by

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Abstract

Government documents, state reports, and peer-reviewed empirical research were reviewed to understand why children who reside in areas where concentrated poverty is pervasive, are entering kindergarten underprepared. Moreover, the review of the literature was used to discover underlying factors that affect the standardized test performance of minority kindergartners. After examining historical educational approaches to minorities in the US, parent perceptions of school readiness, as well as the economic and academic of implications of public investments in pre-kindergarten (pre-K), the results were conflicting. Review of prior studies yield support for proponents and opponents of public investments in pre-K as well as highlight various factors that lead to minority children entering kindergarten underprepared. The literature review did not yield substantial information regarding why parents in minority communities decided to enroll or not enroll their children in early learning programs. However, the literature review did reveal a gap in the presence of parent education programs that address school readiness as it relates to academic achievement and cognitive stimulation in the home environment. According to research, most parent education programs address behavior concerns for school readiness but not address academic preparedness skills. Moreover, the literature supports the use of alternative at-home parent interventions to increase the school readiness skills of children. For these reasons, Bedtime in a Box (BiaB) was a parent intervention worthy of a program evaluation to determine its influence school readiness skills of rising kindergarterners enrolled in pre-K. This mixed methods study using 36 intervention and 20 comparison parent-child dyads found that BiaB was slightly effective in 1) increasing parent efficacy for school readiness skills and 2) moderately effective increasing the school readiness skills of pre-K children students using multiple standardized measures.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family:

To my parents, Brian and Elaine Jones, who raised me to believe that I could accomplish anything in life that I so desired,

To my Granny, Miriam E. Ingram who inspired me to dig a little deeper and to go a little harder by the example that she set for me,

To my line sisters and friends, iron sharpens iron,

And finally, to the late, Shelley A. Jones-Wilson, my loving aunt who showed me how to live my life unapologetically, who showed me how to love, how to forgive, and most importantly, how to dream.

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Chapter 1

Underlying Factors that Affect School Readiness for Minority Children

School readiness is vital for children's life outcomes (Romano, Babchishin, Pagani, & Kohen, 2010). Although there is a debate amongst education professionals and parents about what skills comprise school readiness (Lewit & Baker, 1995), there is agreement that school readiness skills are important to student success (Shaub, 2015). Therefore, a targeted social intervention situated within a studied urban city aims to improve the number of children entering kindergarten prepared (school readiness) in the areas of mathematics, literacy, social foundations, and physical development as assessed by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA, 2017). As of 2017, in the state of Maryland, 43% of kindergarteners are ready for school by KRA measures (KRA, 2017). In the studied city, that number is 38% (see Appendix A), meaning the remaining 62% of students require additional supports to improve their school readiness skills (KRA, 2017). Addressing the school readiness of this country's youngest learners who reside in urban communities beleaguered by pervasive poverty is a concern because low-academic achievement in the early years in associated with societal problems including decreased high school graduation rates, teenage pregnancy, criminal activity, and unemployment (Herman-Smith, 2013; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001). Consequently, by the time children enter school for kindergarten, gaps in socioeconomic and racial achievement exist (Puccioni, 2015).

According to Brooks-Gunn, Markman-Pithers, & Rouse (2016), when children are exposed to educational experiences before they reach kindergarten age can have significant effects on their social, academic, and adult outcomes. Therefore, the studied city is on a mission to fill the number of full day priority pre-kindergarten (pre-K) seats (Green, 2015) to ensure that

its youngest and neediest, in terms of socioeconomic status, learners enter school prepared. However, an outstanding question requiring an answer is: is a public pre-K a sound investment of public dollars? If so, what are the underlying factors considered before concluding that early childhood programs work? Many years of research is available to aid in answering this question, and much of the literature supports the existence and continuation of public pre-K programs. Additionally, many professional industries have examined our society's dilemma concerning our investments in preschool programs (Currie & Neidell, 2007; Herman-Smith, 2013; Karoly, 2016; Valentine & Katz, 2015). Some of those industry professionals include, but are not limited to, education researchers and practitioners, social workers, and economists. Most relevant to this study, there have been a myriad of studies that examine parents' involvement and engagement with school readiness (Epstein, 1995; Benzies, 2015, Mitchell & Fraser, 2014; Portwood, Brooks-Nelson, & Schoeneberger, 2015). However, there have been fewer studies that elevate the voices of parents and their reasons for choosing to enroll, or not enroll, their children in early learning programs before children start kindergarten. Moreover, after a review of the literature, a gap has been discovered in the minimized amount of research dedicated to parents' understanding of school readiness. A substantial amount of the research reveals a concerted effort and interest in developing and monitoring parent programs that emphasize behavior management and parenting skills that in turn lead to stronger parent-child relationships (Guillamón et al., 2013; Breitenstein, Portwood, Brooks-Nelson, & Schoeneberger, 2015; Shanes, Julion, & Gross, 2015). However, there is an abridgement of programs that educate parents on how to support children's overall development, such as socio-emotional, literacy and numeracy skills, and physical development. The current study seeks to explore the voices of parents to identify which underlying factors that may perhaps lead to children being

underprepared for kindergarten in the studied city. Is it parenting style or parents' awareness regarding kindergarten expectations (academic, behavior, cognition) for children? Before exploring this question, examination of historical conditions of minorities, particularly Black people (more than half of the studied city population), in the United States. According to Abel and Johnson (2016) it is critical to examine the civil peregrination that Blacks in the United States of America have endured to be granted the rights of full citizenship. A free and appropriate public education is one of those rights. A strong, yet debatable argument regarding the historical circumstances of *Black* individuals in the country has indirectly led to the current academic performance of minorities living in urban communities similar to the studied city. It is vital to the current study to clarify the term Black due to the many variations that could be used to describe a person who identifies as such. According to Butterfield (2004), Black can be used to refer to African, Caribbean, and African Americans. The current study utilizes the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the state's education agency (SEA), definition of Black or African American as, "a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa" (MSDE, 2007).

Literature Review

Historical Timeline of Minority Education

It is important to note that Blacks in America are very likely the only racial group in which public policies were enacted to prevent them from learning how to read and write. In 1661, it was "deemed illegal" to teach slaves how to read and write, as slave masters thought it would interfere with the theories of slavery (Introduction, 2007). From that point forward, the implications of legally preventing the education of Blacks are still being felt in modern-day America, and more specifically, in the predominately minority communities of the studied

city. Firstly, it is important to address the historical treatment on minority groups in America – specifically Black people. To delve deeper into the historical aspect of the uphill battle that Black people have faced in this country, it is important to share a timeline of key political policies and legal actions that helped shape the educational trials and breakthroughs of Black Americans.

After the abolishment of slavery in 1865, and the passage of the 13th Amendment, the Federal Government passed laws to benefit and protect all of its citizens, regardless of race ("13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution"). Although Blacks were legally free from slavery, they continued to be treated as second-class citizens through discrimination and were forced to fight for equality. Thirty-one years after the passage of 13th Amendment, the Supreme Court upheld "separate but equal" accommodations for Black Americans in US public education (Introduction, 2007). In 1954's landmark case Brown v. Board of Education, the federal government reckoned it illegal to operate segregated schools and overturned the Plessy v. Ferguson ruling (separate but equal).

Ten years later, The Civil Rights Act of 1964 played a pivotal role in the transformation of public education as it is related to Black Americans. As a provision of the act, the Coleman Report published and highlighted the achievement gap between Black American and White students, as well as the absence of tools, interventions, and supports that were absent in Black (African American) homes and communities (Coleman et al., 1966). The same year, the Office of Economic Opportunity spearheaded the Head Start program, which provides early childhood education and wrap arounds supports to serve low-income children and their families (Introduction, 2007).

From the publication of the Reagan Administrations' Report, A Nation at Risk, the federal government began to lay the foundation for a more central role in the field of education

(National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). This new role sparked a significant paradigm shift in the governance of public education in order to help close the identified achievement gap between White and minority students (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). It is during this period that the education community began to identify the academic gap between White and minority students. The Coleman Report associated public education with economics and human capital, consequently peaking the interests of politicians, business owners, and other stakeholders (Mehta, 2013). As a result of increased governance, this report opened the door to change federal mandates such as No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and initiatives such as Race to the Top of 2009, a federal reward system for states that employ standards-based assessments to demonstrate student achievement. This historical timeline illustrates the countries past to the modern-day lens of student achievement for Black students due to mandated government endorsed standardized testing and the politicization of public investments in early childhood education in America.

Since the fall of 2014, the state of Maryland began administering the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) to incoming kindergarten students (KRA, 2017) in collaboration with the state of Ohio as a product of the federal government's Race to the Top Grant (Race to the Top, 2013). The Early Learning Assessment (ELA) was also developed through this same partnership to assess pre-K students three times yearly and was administered for the first time in the studied city in the fall of 2016 in Maryland. The assessment measures pre-K students', "current level of each child's skills, knowledge and behaviors in the areas of Social Foundations, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Physical Well-Being and Motor Development, and Fine Arts" (MSDE, 2017). The KRA and ELA are student measures connected to Maryland's *Ready 4 Kindergarten program,* Maryland's new Early Childhood

Assessment System (MSDE, 2017). The information gathered from these measures are used to inform early learning stakeholders' decision-making to ensure that the district and state are meeting the developmental needs of all children.

However, it should be noted that Black children in the studied city are not performing well on this assessment according to the most recent reports (KRA, 2015; KRA, 2017) and the current study explores the various factors that may provide an explanation for these students' lower levels of performance. In summation, the historical timeline suggests that Black Americans are still impacted by the amassed catastrophe of slavery, racism, and segregation (Introduction, 2007). Arguably, "there is no better sector of society to assess the aggregate impact of these harms than public schooling" (Span, 2015 p. 55). Despite these harms, at the arguable disadvantage that Black students face daily. It is important to be careful of the deficit-based language used by education professionals to describe Black achievement. According to Iruka, Curenton, and Durden (2017) researchers, practitioners, and politicians tend to default to simply retelling statistics about Black children's underachievement compared to their peers and suggests a shift from deficit-based language to a strength-based perspective when describing Black students. This deficit-based language can oftentimes lead to Black children being characterized by the perceived statistical inadequacies (Iruka, Curenton, and Durden, 2017). Moreover, researchers offer a strategy to rename the term *achievement gap* to *opportunity gap* which highlights the discrepancies in the resources between Black children and their peers instead of the difference in their performance (Darling-Hammond, 2015 & Hilliard, 2003). The effects of the legacy of discrimination against minorities in education in this country– namely Black people continues to be at the forefront of education research. To address the needs of America's minority and economically disadvantaged communities, the government initiated

strategic investments in early learning initiatives such as Head Start and standardized tests to as a measure to help minimize the opportunity gap. The following section examines the effectiveness of standardized tests and curriculums in urban communities for cultural relevance and overall relevance in minority communities in order to guide the factors that are relevant to improving children's performance on the standardized assessments.

Standardized Assessments for School Readiness in Maryland

Since 1997, the state of Maryland used the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) as a measure of school readiness for incoming kindergarteners. The MMSRs development by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) was a direct response to the 1990 National Education Goal Panel recommendation for all children to be ready for kindergarten by the year 2000 (Grafwallner, 2009). However, in 2011, the KRA and ELA emerged from a collaboration between Maryland and Ohio after both states applied and received two grants in 2011 from the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) and the Enhanced Assessments Grant (EAG). The RTT-ELC required states to institute a plan to increase the number of at-risk children, ages zero to five, to enroll in high-quality early learning programs and employ an integrated continuum of early learning services (Race to the Top, 2013). The EAG requirement calls for states to improve the overall state of academic assessments for student achievement and to measure student academic achievement using multiple measures that track student academic achievement over time from multiple sources (Title VI, 2002). It is imperative not to gloss over the language of the EAG, because it allows for states to use the assessment tools to identify trends, to make changes to existing policies, or redirect district resources. This language allows SEAs to use the assessments to inform as opposed to establishing aerial goals to improve student achievement.

The KRA, a test comprised of performance-based and observational skills, was administered for the first time, during the 2014-2015 school year, to all incoming kindergarteners enrolled in Maryland's public schools. According to a report published by MSDE in 2015, the KRA measures the social foundations, physical and motor development, mathematics and language and literacy skills that children should have acquired before they enter kindergarten (Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, 2015). Because the KRA is a new assessment, to date, there has not been any peer-reviewed research that examined the effectiveness of the KRA. However, according to the MSDE Kindergarten Readiness School Year 2016-2017 Report, the KRA items were evaluated for their psychometrics, difficulty, discrimination (i.e., item-total correlation), and internal consistency during school year 2015-2016 (MSDE, 2017). Results demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of .93, yielding an excellent on internal consistency (MSDE, 2017). The state of Maryland actively utilizes the KRA data to inform the status of children's school readiness. Although alternative school readiness measures will be used in the current study, the problem of practice that guides the current study uses the KRA as the primary indicator of school readiness. However, the Early Learning Assessment (ELA) is given to students three times during their pre-K year in the studied city. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the origin of these tests, how its used in Maryland, and the potential limitations of using the standardized assessment for assessing school readiness skills.

To date, there have been debates in the literature about the use of statewide assessments (Wodtke, Harper, Schommer, Brunelli, 1989; Oakland, 1972, such as the KRA). There are many questions about the relevance of testing children at such a young age. Some of the arguments about the relevance include measuring the effectiveness of preschool programs, screening for disabilities, and even tracking or redshirting certain children, or even further questioning school

readiness. Moreover, there are other units of separation include separating or classifying children by race and class. If school readiness is defined as a measure of physical, social, emotional and cognitive development, why separate or classify children? Yoon (2015) asserts that school readiness is simply "a social construct determined by cultural norms that are upheld by those in power" (p.368). Given her assertion, it is important to note whose ideologies and standards are to be assessed and if those standards are aligned with the population to be tested. Much of standardized tests use a skills-based approach to measure readiness. However, these tests do not utilize the same approach for measuring cultural and social norms within a diverse community (Genishi & Dyson, 2009). Consequently, if a child scores below average, according to this measure, results could alter the course of the child's academic trajectory, primarily because the skills that the child enters school with are not valued or measured by the standardized test.

Furthermore, there is much debate about incorporating more developmentally appropriate practices into the classroom (i.e., play and child-centered instruction) to improve test scores. However, the skill expectations for students to perform well on the tests do not align with those expectations, much more needs to be done to bridge the gap in this area (Brown, 2011). Standardized testing is controversial, and some question its relevance in assessing the readiness of the Nation's youngest learners (Meisels, 1989; Yoon, 2015). The relevance of this argument is supported by research which reveals that children from diverse backgrounds, who do not necessarily come from mainstream environments, have the ability to perform on the same playing field as non-minority students (Terry, Mills, Bingham, Mansour, & Marencin, 2013; Winsler et al, 2012). The primary issue in the United States is that there is no presence of a standardized measure to capture this diverse cultural experiences information. A final consideration regarding standardized testing is whether or not tests are administered in a standard

procedure. The administration is a major factor to consider when examining variation in test scores. Studies have shown that even the slightest variation in a test design, administration, or environment, could greatly influence scores (Oakland, 1972; Wodtke, Harper, Schommer, Brunelli, 1989). Despite the ongoing debates about standardized assessments, there is a consensus in the literature that affirms how critical it is to support children's school readiness during the preschool years (Freberg, 1991; Marcon, 1999). The following sections review various factors that may contribute to children's school readiness. Simultaneously, it is important to understand the politics and economics of pre-K programs funded by government initiatives because both disciplines heavily influence the operation of publicly funded pre-K programs.

Political and Economic Considerations of Preschool Programs in the United States

Politicians have begun adopting the idea of universal public pre-K programs as a political agenda item for their platforms (Brown & Wright, 2011). In a study using Edelman's Theory of Political Spectacle as a framework, researchers found that the most politicization of universal pre-K programs occurs primarily at the state level. The researchers argue that Democratic politicians favor the concept for economic reasons, citing higher earnings in adulthood, decreased special education referrals, lower teen pregnancy rates, and lower drop out rates for those who attend pre-K programs (Brown & Wright, 2011).

Proponents of preschools argue that a child with preschool experience (before entering kindergarten), helps close the achievement gap (Tucker-Drob, 2011). According to education researchers, four-year-old minority children, from low socioeconomic status (SES) and home environments lacking cognitive stimulation, perform better in reading and math when they attend preschool compared to peers who did not attend preschool before kindergarten (Tucker-Drob, 2011). This study also found that children who would benefit most from preschool were the least

likely to enroll (Tucker-Drob, 2011). Tucker-Drob (2011) argue that this phenomenon occurs as a result of not having adequate affordable quality early learning programs in the areas that need them. Again, this is another reason why officials who serve communities that experience pervasive poverty remain committed to increasing the number of pre-K slots available for their youngest learners.

Pursuing this debate further, there is much controversy in the political realm as whether or not public pre-K is a wise investment of taxpayer dollars. A team of researchers explored this controversial topic using the Woodcock Johnson Achievement Test. They discovered that students who enrolled in pre-K showed higher academic advantages in the areas of letter-word identification, math, and spelling in kindergarten when compared to children who began kindergarten without pre-K experience (Gormley et al., 2005). As a result of their research, it is evident that pre-K exposure may improve the kindergarten readiness of children and is a sound financial investment.

It is in this area of investments where economists conduct industry crossover research about supply and demand regarding early childhood education (Henry & Rickman, 2007; Bartik, Gormley, & Adelstein, 2012). Where competing interests quell constituent enthusiasm, economists' research about the benefit of preschool programs is contrariant at best. Both proponents and opponents of pre-K programs present valid evidence when assessing the quality of early learning programs. However, choosing to expand or scale back early learning services in a local district, should consider why a parent decides to enroll or not enroll in an early learning program. Using the nationally representative Early Childhood Longitudinal Study- Kindergarten (ECLS-K) of 1998, economists examined the effects of pre-K programs on academics and behavior outcomes over time after controlling for family and school characteristics (Magnuson,

Ruhm, & Waldogel, 2007b). They found that overall pre-K (including Head Start) did increase math and literacy scores but also increased behavior problems at the start of kindergarten (Magnuson, Ruhm, & Waldogel, 2007b).

A more noteworthy finding was that the academic advantages of pre-K fade after approximately one to two years of schooling as peer performance begin to normalize due to school quality (Magnuson, Ruhm, & Waldogel, 2007b). With this consequential finding, researchers mention that opponents of publicly funded early learning programs could argue that public pre-K does not lead to increased student performance outcomes over time, resultantly, deeming the program, a waste of public funds (Duncan, Jenkins, Watts, Magnuson, Clements, Sarama, Wolfe & Spitler, 2015). Even more alarming, multiple studies cite pre-K attendance associations with higher levels of problem behavior in kindergarten (Magnuson, Ruhm, Waldogel, 2007a; Hilbert & Eis, 2013). Consistent research has demonstrated that when children come from non-affluent backgrounds, they showed a sustained benefit from preschool (Magnuson, Ruhm, Waldogel, 2007a). Although the benefits may fade, regarding their academic achievement, students were still able to maintain an edge over their peers, who do not have any preschool experience, whether enrolled in a small classroom with high-quality instruction or a large classroom with inadequate instruction (Hilbert & Eis, 2013).

A study led by economic researchers Temple and Reynolds (2005) found supporting evidence for public funding for early learning programs. Children enrolled in preschool programs saved the local district approximately $5,000 to $9,000 per child, in special education placements costs (Temple & Reynolds, 2005). They used longitudinal studies and data from previous research to make causal interpretations about the benefits of high-quality preschool programs and other supplemental programs for at-risk populations (Temple & Reynolds, 2005).

Their research supports the notion of contributing sound public investments in public pre-K as it will lead to societal cost savings in the future. However, it is important to note that children who would benefit most from preschools are the group that is least likely to be enrolled, which perpetuates the cycle of the opportunity gap. (Tucker-Drob, 2011).

Past Noteworthy Preschool Programs

History tells us that high-quality early programs were primarily available to affluent children (Brown & Wright, 2011). However, since the launch of Head Start programs in the 1960s, the circumstances of early childhood education in America has changed. The idea of providing high-quality early learning programs for all children has been gaining momentum over the last 40 years (Brown & Wright, 2011).A notable program is the Head Start is a national program formed under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations to address of the War on Poverty in America in 1965 (Welshman, 2010). A little-known fact is the program was initially modeled after the Freedom Schools of Mississippi, an eight-week summer program. (Tomek, 2014).

There have been a number of two-generation approaches to preschool education to service children and parents. The Perry Preschool Program (PPP) is an example of this type of program. The PPP was designed by David Weikart, who was the program administrator for the public school system in Ypsilanti, Michigan (Gramlich, 1986). The PPP enrolled all Black three and four-year-olds into the program who were considered to be disadvantaged. The curriculum was developed and influenced by famed developmental psychologist Jean Piaget. Additionally, each child received a 90-minute home visit as a component of the program (Gramlich, 1986).

The goal of the program was to promote academic readiness that would ultimately lead to increased academic performance throughout K-12 schooling (Wortman, 1995). The program was

hypothesized to decrease special education referrals, retention in grades and crime, and increase graduation rates. The PPP operated for five years; 1985-1989. Twenty-two years after the PPP, researchers at the High/Scope Education Research Foundation located 117 of the 123 participants to interview them at the age of 27 (Wortman, 1995). The results of the intervention were significant when compared to their peers who did not participate in the PPP. Some of those results are high school graduation rates (66% to 45%), receiving welfare benefits (59% to 80%), male lifetime arrests (12% to 49%), and overall monthly income ($1,219 to $766; Wortman, 1995). The PPP clearly benefitted its participants in multiple facets of their lives. This data suggests that societal early learning investments contribute to the greater good of society and the individual participants.

Another unique program is the Carolina Abecedarian Project (CAP). This program served children from birth to pre-K (just before they enter kindergarten). The CAP offered a full day program to children as well as home visiting services to parents to teach well-being indicators (Herman-Smith, 2013). To test the efficacy of the program 111 infants were randomly assigned to either control (typical childcare) or experimental (CAP) groups. After the completion of CAP and enrollment into kindergarten, the study found children in the experimental group scored approximately one standard deviation above children in the control group on multiple assessments (Herman-Smith, 2013). Additional findings from this program include “higher achievement scores on high school standardized tests, fewer placements in special education, fewer grade repetitions, higher high school graduation rates, and higher college enrollment” (Herman-Smith, 2013, p.69) and “significantly lower teenage pregnancies” (Herman-Smith, 2013, p.69). Ultimately, both PPP and CAP showed increases in cognitive gains and aggressive behavior in children that dissipated by third to fourth grade (Herman-Smith, 2013).

What these investments in early learning programs reveal are short-term academic gains that dissipate over time. However, the long-term finding is a greater societal impact regarding higher graduation rates, fewer students referred to special education services, and decreased teen pregnancy, etc. A critical component missing from these programs, however, are a robust parent education program. A weekly home visit does not appear to be enough to ensure parent engagement and involvement in the academic careers of their children, nor prevent academic dissipation over time.

Developmental Appropriateness of Curriculum and Accreditation

Armed with the benefits of public pre-K and experimental pre-K programs for minority children, it is important to explore curriculums and the importance of accreditation to determine the quality of programs. Research findings question the developmental appropriateness of pre-K curricula for children growing up in low-income urban settings. The following study explored this question in great depth by examining the developmental relevance of teaching preschoolers through play-based instruction, compared to traditional didactic or mixed method approaches to teaching early childhood education in urban settings. Marcon (1999) studied the effects of whether a child-initiated, middle of the road or mixed approach, or academically directed method was more efficient in yielding positive outcomes for students in urban communities. Using the Pre-K Survey of Beliefs and Practices (Minuchin & Shapiro, 1983) to collect data, their findings suggest that children enrolled in child-initiated and academically directed programs perform better academically than children enrolled in the mixed approach model (Marcon, 1999). Even more revealing, children enrolled in child-initiated programs performed significantly better in all subject areas than children in academically directed programs (Marcon, 1999). This research

suggests a need to examine a variety of pedagogical approaches that are culturally responsive in teaching culturally and linguistically children in urban environments.

Along the lines of exploring developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood education, it is imperative to reference the seminal work of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that he coined late in his career (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD is the variance between what a child can do on their own without assistance and what he or she can do with the help of a more advanced peer or adult (Vygotsky, 1978). Many of the new play-based programs are modeled using the principles of the ZPD shaped by Vygotsky. In the late 1990's and early 2000's, more early childhood researchers began to explore the efficacy of play-based programs. During this period studies began to consider how influential children are on their peers' skill development (Fleer, 2011; Henry & Rickman, 2007; Martucci, 2014; Piker, 2013). All of these studies found significant academic and behavioral benefits of implementing a non-traditional didactic approach to instructing young children.

Now that the early learning community has successfully spread their platform of increasing the dosage and diversifying the pedagogical techniques of early learning experiences before kindergarten; the desire for assessing the quality of pre-existing and newly formed early learning environments grow. The field of education refers to this notion as accreditation (Winterbottom & Piasta, 2013). Accreditation is a universal marker of a high-quality early childhood program. The most popular early childhood accrediting agency is the National Association for the Education of the Young Child (NAEYC), a leader in the early childhood education field. However, many states have their own accreditation standards and quality improvement rating systems.

In Maryland, the MSDE has its own NAEYC aligned accreditation program for childcare, pre-K and kindergarten programs through the *Maryland Excels*, a quality improvement rating system (Maryland Excels, 2015). Winterbottom and Piasta (2013) examined the Florida State School Readiness Data for kindergarteners via the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS) and the Early Childhood Observation from 2007-2010. The assessments measure physical development, literacy and language, mathematics, social skills, science, social studies, and creative arts. Researchers found no evidence that children from accredited programs were more prepared for kindergarten than children from non-accredited programs (Winterbottom &Piasta, 2015). Their findings put the universal pre-K argument into perspective and forces proponents and opponents of publicly funded early learning programs to examine the cost and benefits of investing in early learning programs before kindergarten. With a burgeoning standard of excellence budding in the field, one should question if accreditation is a true indicator of a high-quality childhood program and if that the accreditation designation in and of itself is used as a marketing tool to attract more parents to enroll in early learning programs. The next important implication surrounding this school readiness of young children in urban environments characterized by element of poverty is the role of parents in school preparedness. After one considers the economic, political, and historical context of the school readiness issue in the studied city, this study argues that the parent role to be critical to help address and ultimately eliminate the issue of school readiness, not program accreditation. For the current study, the intervention and control groups are located in early learning programs that are accredited from MSDE and have achieved the highest (level 5) in Maryland Excels, Maryland's Quality Rating Improvement System.

Parent Beliefs, Behaviors, and Intervention Programs

It is important to consider parents' role in school readiness because parents are children's first teachers, and it is imperative for researchers and practitioners to understand this concept before conducting any research or beginning any interventions involving a child's readiness for learning (Kaiser & Handcock, 2003). According to Baker & Rimm-Kaufman (2014), when parents stimulate their child's learning environment in the home, a teachers' ratings of the children's social emotional behaviors that positively impact school readiness were higher than with children whose parents to do not stimulate their children's home learning environment. When considering parent interventions in early learning environments, it is critical to consider parents' beliefs and attitudes regarding school readiness and expectations of kindergarten (Puccioni, 2015). As such, it is important to note the differences between readiness for learning (basic developmental process for learning specific content matter) and readiness for school (specific set of skills acquired before starting kindergarten; Diamond, Reagan, Bandyk, 2000). With these two different perspectives on readiness, it is natural for parents to have a wide variety of perspectives as it relates to their children entering kindergarten. Overall, Diamond et al. (2000) revealed that parents' understanding about school readiness continues to be unreliable, and attention and resources are required to help parents understand the rigor and expectations of their local district's kindergarten to determine if their child is prepared (Kim & Murdock, 2005).

According to Puccioni (2015), in general parents tend to define school readiness by a child's academic (i.e. letter and number identification) performance, while educational professionals tend use a more broad perspective to include both physical and socio-emotional development. She also believes that most of the literature is dedicated to juxtaposing the perceptions of parents and education experts and offer minimal suggestive patterns that influence

parents' school readiness beliefs (Puccioni, 2015). However, a parent's historic, socioeconomic, or cultural context could help shape their perception of school readiness and suggests that parent facilitated educational activities in the home were beneficial for students transitioning to kindergarten (Puccioni, 2015). Due to this phenomenon, it should be the burden of education professionals and policy makers to explicitly define school readiness to best support parents in helping to prepare their children (Barnett & Ackerman, 2006).

There are a variety of parenting interventions embedded in pre-K programs that address parents' role in children's school readiness. Popular evidence-based early learning programs that involve parent interactions include the Chicago Parent Program (CPP), the PPP, and the CAP. These programs focus on school readiness through the lens of parenting practices and behavior management; however, they do not provide education for children's academic achievement and cognitive stimulation. According to Herman-Smith (2013), parents do not necessarily possess the skill set to stimulate young children cognitively and prepare them for academic success. Moreover, he suggests that recent research in the areas of neuroscience and genetics suggest a deficit in validity, reliability, and cultural differences of measures used to understand parent behaviors and interactions with their children (Herman-Smith, 2013).

Equally as important is how parents involve and engage themselves in the education of their child. Other important considerations are ethnicity, cultural background, and barriers to involvement and engagement. It is also important to understand the difference between parental engagement and parent involvement. "Parental engagement will involve a greater commitment, a greater ownership of action, than will parental involvement with schools" (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014, p. 400). Parental involvement is defined as "the act of taking part in an activity or event, or situation" (Macmillan Dictionary, 2009–2012b). The current study will

examine both parents' involvement with the school and their engagement with student learning in the home.

Another important consideration for parent involvement and engagement in their child's preschool involvement is their cultural beliefs systems and values. Children who are entering kindergarten underprepared, typically come from one of the following groups: low socioeconomic status, ethnic minority, or immigrant (Keels, 2009). With children who have at least one foreign-born parent now being the fast-growing population in America, it is important for education leaders to familiarize themselves about families' belief systems, as it relates to education (Keels, 2009). Research has shown that maternal cognitive skills have a direct impact on child cognitive development and ultimately the more educated the mother is, she is less likely to adhere to cultural traditions of parenting and be more liable to utilize United States (US) mainstream approaches to parenting (Keels, 2009). This idea should not suggest that US cultural approaches are better but proposes that the research in this area sheds light on cultural differences in a way that is helpful in understanding parenting styles. These findings offer just cause to initiate a dialogue about the differences between the conventional ways of rearing children in the US versus a more cultural approach. While parents may possess fundamental cultural beliefs, their behaviors as it relates to child development could be different (Keels, 2009).

To continue the discussion of relevant fundamental beliefs, it is well documented that most parents do want to engage in their children's educational careers (Williams & Sanchez, 2011). However, barriers (e.g., time, access to the school, financial resources, and awareness of school policies or events) prevent them from doing so (Williams & Sanchez, 2011). If a school district, or even a school-based team, delves just a little beyond the surface, other barriers may be

present and should be addressed accordingly. For example, a school-based team may find that a disability, lack of transportation, mental health, and self-esteem, parental support, decreased access points for early childhood education, and access to healthy food options are keeping a parent from engaging and being involved in school affairs (Finigan-Carr, Vandigo, Uretsky, Oloyede, & Mayden, 2015; Williams & Sanchez, 2011). In these cases, are preschool programs equipped to help support families in these situations or is there an expectation for preschool programs to help? Despite many interventions, such as breakfast programs and parenting classes offered in preschool programs, the gaps in the content still exist – for example, most of programs do not provide content on how to address children's academic achievement to support school readiness and what to expect from children (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2003; Finigan-Carr, Vandigo, Uretsky, Oloyede, & Mayden, 2015; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005; Yeung & Pfeiffer, 2009).

A relevant implication of conducting research in an urban setting whose inhabitants experience challenges associated with low-income, unemployment, and minimal community resources is the definition of parent expectation. Parent expectation for the purpose of this study is "realistic beliefs or judgments that parents have about their child's future achievement as reflected in course grades, the highest level of schooling attained, and college attendance" (Puccioni, 2015, p.131). This definition is important because research highlights the varying differences in perspectives of affluent and less affluent parents. Ethnographic research suggests affluent parents have a better understanding of school readiness by seeking guidance from education professionals within their networks (Graue, 1993). Conversely, less affluent parents tend to ground their perceptions about school readiness on their experiences with kindergarten (Graue, 1993).

Armed with the knowledge of varying perceptions of parent expectations regarding school readiness, a study spanning a 14 year period (1993 to 2007) revealed that parents' awareness of school readiness skills increased over time, but there was not significant increase in parent effort (behavior) to support their child(ren)'s school readiness (Belfield & Garcia, 2014). Another interesting finding from this study was that enrolling a child in a preschool program did not significantly increase parent efforts nor did it help to shift parent expectations of school readiness (Belfield & Garcia, 2014). This study contributes to the discussion by highlighting the need for parent education regarding school readiness in preschool programs. School readiness is not solely social-emotional (behavior), cognitive (academic), or physical development (fine and gross motor) skills. It is a combination of the three that will lead to long-term outcomes of children, and the study suggests more research should be conducted to determine how this information can be used to design effective parent programs to increase school readiness.

Conclusion

With the political and economic implications of early learning programs, why are minorities the center of this debate? The facts are quite evident in that America's history reveals evidence of oppression against minorities. Arguably, minorities populate low-income communities. These communities can usually, but not always, be characterized by low-performing schools, title one schools, high crime, and lack of work opportunities. According to Johnson (2014), America continues to be separate. He draws this comparison to America's Jim Crow era of separate but equal ideologies of the 1870s to the early 1960s. According to his research of disaggregating the data from the ECLS-K Cohort 1998-1999 and the National Center for Education Statistics in 2002, being a minority, alone, does not lead to lower test scores. Low test scores for children in northern states come from being enrolled in schools with

predominately high minority enrollment. However, if they enrolled in a predominately low minority school, students perform well (Johnson, 2014). This same idea garners support the research of Fram and Kim (2012), who found that segregation begins before children enter kindergarten. Children enrolled in center-based care typically attend with racially similar peers. According to the researchers, predominately minority-based childcare provides lower quality care and education. As a result, factors such as income-restricted programs like Head Start and residential segregation) lead to racial-ethnic grouping for these childcare centers. Based on these factors researchers conclude that low-income children can be "priced out" of higher quality programs (Fram & Kim, 2012). Their research is another form of evidence that racial segregation can impact the quality of education received.

As presented above, multiple variables can be used to evaluate the current state of publicly funded early learning programs and why children in the studied city are consistently entering kindergarten underprepared according to the KRA. The current study identifies parents' beliefs, behaviors, and expectations as key factors that influence why they choose or not choose to engage in school readiness skill preparation for their rising kindergarteners. There has been research over the past few decades that highlight parents' belief systems can vary by racial classification as they relate to school readiness. For example, researchers assert that minority parents were more concerned about preacademic readiness skills, but less likely to act on those concerns by delaying the start of kindergarten; while white parents were more likely to consider delaying the start of kindergarten if they did not believe their child was ready. (Diamond, Reagan, Bandyk, 2000). Another example includes the finding that all parents valued reading to their children (Keels, 2009). However, White parents were more likely to do "shared book

reading" dialogue and minority parents were more likely to read and not engage in dialogue with their children about the book (Keels, 2009).

We can determine that parents' understanding about school readiness continues to be unreliable, and suggest that attention should be given to helping parents understand the rigor and expectations of their local district's kindergarten to determine if their child is prepared (Kim & Murdock, 2005). With so many underlying factors surrounding parents' perceptions, beliefs, and practices regarding school readiness, it is evident that more research is required to better understand parent efficacy throughout the United States surrounding school readiness skills. For example, research suggests that cohesion beliefs (family purpose and child development) and structure (support and organization) were related to increased social competence, academic achievement, and positive behavior of a child (Smith, Prinz, Dumas, & Laughlin, 2001). Families with organization and children having display a distinct role in the family exhibited an expressed interest in learning as reported by teachers and parents (Smith, Prinz, Dumas, & Laughlin, 2001). Conversely, families with less structure were associated with behavior problems in children (Smith, Prinz, Dumas, & Laughlin, 2001). These findings are relevant because they are related to the structure in the home.

However, despite the mounting evidence which indicates that rituals and routines in the home lend to better outcomes for children, there is a gap in the research that does not explore whether or not rituals and routines increase school readiness skills that lend to a smoother transition to kindergarten (Ferretti & Bub, 2017). Given the history of the treatment of minorities in America, accompanied by questions raised about the developmental appropriateness, access to high-quality early learning programs, and the debatable purpose of standardized tests, it is clear that many underlying factors contribute to minority children entering kindergarten without the

necessary prerequisite skills deemed necessary to do well in school. Previous research studies suggest that more research needs to be done to gain additional information to determine parents' and teachers' perceptions about children's transition to kindergarten and their readiness skills (Okagaki & Diamond, 2000; Robinson & Diamond, 2014). According to the research of Herman-Smith, family involvement in early learning programs lead to positive child outcomes, however, the early programs need support to effectively engage parents versus involve parents (Herman-Smith, 2013).

Therefore, the current study aims to meet the need by learning more about parents with the inclusion of teachers' beliefs about school readiness in urban communities through questionnaires designed for each group. The next session reviews the initial needs assessment for the current problem of practice – school readiness.

Chapter 2

Needs Assessment Report: Empirical Examination of Parent and Educator Beliefs on Early Childhood Education

Introduction

A private-public partnership created by the state of Maryland, and jointly funded by the state and local donors, is designed to help the city's children enter kindergarten ready to learn. The early learning programs assist children and families in various Title 1 schools with supplemental early learning programs to get children prepared for school through this public-private partnership. These centers serve as hubs to wrap around services to children ages zero to five years and their families with diverse early learning experiences (DeAtley, C., n.d.). A primary tenant of the center is to minimize the opportunity gap through the delivery of these wrap-around services with a multi-generation approach. An important goal for the centers is to identify and mitigate underlying factors that cause children in the state of Maryland not to perform well on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA).

Children in a studied city in Maryland are entering kindergarten underprepared in the areas of literacy and language, mathematics, social foundations, and physical (fine & gross motor) developmental domains as measured by the KRA (Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, 2015). Data collected from the 2014-2015 school year (see Appendix B for KRA scores) and 2015-2016 (see Appendix C for KRA scores) suggests many students are not "ready" for kindergarten.

School readiness is represented by earning a score of proficient on the KRA within the first 30 days upon entering their kindergarten year. Early childhood educators in the state of Maryland use the KRA as an indicator of what areas they need to improve for children to

become school ready. Maryland districts are allowed to designate whether to administer a census or randomized sample administration. The studied city selected to administer the KRA using census method. Please refer to Appendix D for documentation. Based on test results, improvements are made to classrooms through best practices and interventions to improve the outcomes of the children. When children enter school behind their peers, they contribute to the opportunity gap in America. Research has highlighted a noteworthy variance with early childhood test scores of Black and White students (Quinn, 2014) and will continue to remain and grow as children matriculate throughout their academic careers (Quinn, 2014). This problem is important for researchers to examine because underachievement in school is systemic and if not tackled in the primary years of schooling, children, in particular, Black children could lag behind White children for the duration of their academic careers. With such a significant problem with the field of early childhood education, it is important to understand the perspectives of parents and educators to help solve the problem (Grace & Brandt, 2005). It is a common assumption that parents' perspective on school readiness influence their behavior (Pucconi, 2015). Independent of the assumption, less attention has been directed to examining the relationship between parents' beliefs regarding school readiness and their behavioral practices on the children's outcomes as they transition to kindergarten (Barbarin et al, 2008; Taylor, Clayton, & Rowley, 2004).

This needs assessment targeted the voices of parents and educators to identify which underlying factors cause children to enter kindergarten underprepared. This study also examined the constructs of parent beliefs, expectations, and attitudes toward school readiness, what parenting behaviors parents exhibit before children reach school age, and early childhood educators beliefs about parent involvement.

Goals and Objectives

Research suggests that parents are children's first and best teachers; therefore, the current needs assessment is designed to learn more about parent beliefs and behaviors regarding school readiness practices in the home before entering kindergarten. Some questions selected for the needs assessment come from peer-reviewed studies that surveyed parent beliefs. In addition to the peer-reviewed survey items, I developed a number of exploratory questions to learn what parents think about specific topics relevant to school readiness (Schutt, 2012). As such, this research relies on a mixed methods paradigm to address the goals and objectives of this study. The research questions that guide the needs assessment are listed below:

What is the current status of parents' behaviors, beliefs, and awareness regarding school readiness?

What parent beliefs lead to parents enrolling or not enrolling children in early learning programs before kindergarten?

fWhat are the perspectives of school-based staff surrounding early learning programs offered in their districts?

Methodology

The setting of this study occurs in an urban city. Using a mixed methods approach to data collection, I designed surveys developed for parents and educators of children ages six and under. These measurement tools examined respondents' beliefs and behaviors surrounding school readiness. School readiness is defined as the presence of gains in the areas of social foundations, physical well-being and motor development, language and literacy, and mathematics required to be successful in kindergarten (Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, 2015). On the surveys, students' performance on the KRA was utilized as an indicator of school

readiness. The KRA is a statewide assessment that is given to students within the first month of their kindergarten year. A parent survey was used as a tool to measure parent, attitudes, and perceptions about the role of early childhood education for academic success (Kim & Murdock, 2005; Williams & Sanchez, 2011). Findings will be explained using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics.

Additional data considered in this study came from The Bainum Foundation (TBF). TBF is an organization committed to making educational investments. The TBF conducted a needs assessment in the city from December 2015 to March 2016. TBF hosted a community dinner where they polled the audience of stakeholders for specific questions using an electronic response tool. Participants would simply click a button that corresponded with an answer to a question that was projected onto a screen. TBF also conducted three focus groups and compiled the parent responses into a summary report of the focus groups. The focus group sessions were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded into themes. Themes from the overview of the focus group (see Appendix E) were used to help design the parent survey but not utilized in the main conclusions because I did not have access to the original transcripts from the focus groups. I accessed both of the TBF's documents and utilized some of TBF's stakeholder poll findings with their expressed permission.

Participants

Eighteen early childhood education professionals, who were recruited to participate using a community educator listserv, completed the Early Learning Educator Survey. Demographical information includes the following: (a) 33% of respondents were administrators or program managers, (b) 33% were teachers, (c) 11% were classroom paraeducators or instructional assistants, and (d) 22.2 % were related service providers. Eleven percent of respondents taught

pre-K, 16.67 % taught kindergarten, 5.56 % taught Early Head Start, 5.56 % taught Head Start, and 61.11 % did not identify their role as a classroom teacher. Approximately 62% of respondents serve children with special needs and 38.89% do not serve children with special needs. A half of respondents hold a state teaching license. Relevant data from the Early Learning Educator Survey is included in the appendices (see Appendix F).

A total of 55 parents completed the Early Learning Parent Survey. Ages of the respondents were: (a) ages 15-20, 1.82%, (b) ages 21-25, 27.27%, (c) ages 26-30, 29.09%, and (d) 36 plus, 16.36%. The education levels of respondents are as follows: (a) Less than high school, no GED 18.18%, (b) High School Diploma or GED 41.82%, (c) Some College, but no degree 30.91%, (d) Associate of Arts Degree (A.A.) 5.45%, and (e) Bachelor's Degree (B.A./B.S.) 3.64%. The age range of the respondents' children was (a) 12.73% with a child who was Three (24 months – 36 months), (b) 50.91% with a child who was four (37 months – 48 months), (c) 25.45% with a child who was five (49 months – 60 months), and (d) 10.91% had a child who was six (61 months – 72 months). Relevant data from the Early Learning Parent Survey is included in the appendices (see Appendix G).

Pre-existing data from the TBF's community dinner was gathered from approximately 100 stakeholders in the community, including parents, school personnel, church members, residents, and business owners. Relevant demographic data from respondents identify themselves as: (a) Parent (34.48%), (b) Grandparents (10.34%), and (c) Guardians with children living in their household (1.15%), (d) Service provider of children (4.60%), (e) Interested community member or leader (37.93%), and (f) Other (11.49%). Relevant data from TBF poll data is included in the appendices (see Appendix H).

Measures

The Early Learning Educator Survey was designed using closed-ended questions from The Survey of Early Childhood Educators developed by Ohio State University to measure early childhood educator's beliefs and behaviors (Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016). Exploratory, open-ended questions were added by the primary researcher to learn more about what educators *think* about the specific curriculum they teach and what skills are essential for school readiness.

The Early Learning Parent Survey was developed using a combination of pre-existing measures. Closed-ended questions were sampled from the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Enrolled National Household Education Survey from 2012, the School Readiness National Household Survey from 2007, and the Ohio Survey of Early Childhood II – Parent Questionnaire from Ohio State University (Jeon & Buettner, 2015). Additionally, exploratory and open-ended questions were added to learn more about what parents think about early childhood education as it relates to their child's school readiness. Appendix F and G indicate the citations of each item.

TBF's community dinner poll asked respondents a series of fixed-choice questions (Schutt, 2014) to gather the stakeholders' opinions about various issues in the community. There is no documented evidence to support that questions asked by TBF were reliable and validated. However, many of the questions asked to the stakeholders are pertinent to the current needs assessment. The results have been interpreted with caution. Moreover, the summary of three focus groups facilitated by the TBF (see Appendix E) influenced the design the educator and parent surveys.

Data Collection Methods

To gain a better understanding of what educators believe are important tenants of school readiness and what they have identified as areas of opportunity to help close the opportunity gap. I used peer-reviewed survey questions to ensure reliability and validity of survey items. Similar to the parent survey, I extracted questions from validated and reliable questions from another educator survey and developed exploratory questions to learn more about what teachers think about children's school preparedness levels and the interactions with parents. Both parent and educator surveys included open-ended questions. This measurement tool is called the Early Educator Survey (see Appendix F). The early learning educator survey was transferred to the Survey Monkey website on April 23, 2016. Respondents, which were recruited through a neighborhood educator listserv, were sent by emails with a link to the password secured Survey Monkey questionnaire on April 24, 2016. The survey remained open until May 5, 2016. An initial email was to 26 early learning professionals. Emails were acquired by searching organization websites. It is important to note that the original email was generated from the Survey Monkey website and not personalized from the researcher. From the original email, nine responses were received. On April 28, 2016, a reminder email was sent to invitees who did not respond to the initial email. This second email included a web link that was sent from the primary researcher's work email address. This attempt garnered seven additional responses. On May 3, 2016, a final reminder email was sent to invitees. The third attempt garnered two additional responses for a total of 18. All 18 surveys were automatically analyzed using the descriptive statistics generated by Survey Monkey. No manual data entry was required.

Before distributing the early learning parent paper-based survey for responses, I asked four parents to review the questionnaire for overall readability and content on April 19, 2016.

This process prompted me to add a comments section at the end of the survey. Additionally, a question concerning the number of times a parent has visited the school was removed and replaced with a reliable and validated question. Lastly, the question regarding enrollment was edited to use 'parent-friendly' language to ensure parents fully understood the terminology used within the question. On April 22, 2016, the paper-version survey was distributed to parents who attended a pre-K and kindergarten enrollment event. After completing the enrollment documents, parents were asked to participate in the study. Parents who were willing to participate in the study signed an informed consent form and completed the questionnaire at the event and returned them to the primary researcher. Additionally, on the same day, surveys were sent home in the backpacks of 42 pre-K students. Attached to the survey was a letter asking parents to turn completed surveys in by April 29, 2016. On April 27, 2016, surveys were sent home in the backpacks of 63 kindergarten students. The same letter, asking parents to turn completed surveys in by April 29, 2016, was attached. In total, 55 surveys were returned and I manually entering data into Survey Monkey. Upon entering the last survey, data was analyzed using descriptive statistics generated by Survey Monkey.

The TBF poll data were collected on December 16, 2015, in a school in at an informal but structured community dinner. A facilitator asked multiple questions to community stakeholders. The responses were collected using an electronic keypad. The result of each question was shown immediately to the respondents before proceeding to the next question. All answers were anonymous and counted only one time for each question. Participants received a $25 gift card to Target after they completed the poll.

Results from the Needs Assessment

Research Question One

What is the current status of parents' behaviors, beliefs, and awareness regarding school readiness?

This first research question was answered using descriptive statistics from the parent survey. Key findings revealed that nearly half of all parent respondents reported that work hours limit their ability to participate and be involved in their child's schooling. However, almost 70% of parents reported attending at least one event such as a back to school night or open house. The majority of respondents, 77.5% enrolled their child in a school readiness program before kindergarten. School readiness programs included programs such as Head Start, pre-K, or Preschool. Approximately, 47% enrolled their children in these early learning programs for academic skills, 33% for social skills, and 37% because they needed child care services. Slightly over 80% of respondents to the Early Learning Parent Survey reported that parents did not participate in an available home visiting program. However, the TBF poll showed that nearly 60% of respondents who have children who qualify for home-visiting services would participate in the service. It should be noted that the TBF poll included input from the entire community. The primary researcher's survey samples a subpopulation of the studied community.

When asked about the main reason the respondent chose to enroll their child in an early learning program, 55% cited the desire to prepare children for school, and 18% reported that they needed childcare while the parent was at school or work. A little over 75% believe there are good early learning options in the community. The TBF poll also showed about 39 % of stakeholders identified at least one good early learning childcare option in the community. The majority of questions that asked about specific at home practices that parents or guardians did before a child

enters kindergarten were mixed. However, it was encouraging to discover that the majority of parents believe it is essential or very important for caregivers to practice behaviors such as teaching their child the alphabet, numbers, and how to read. This finding is an indicator that was used to select the current parent intervention to increase school readiness skills at in the home.

When asked if enrolling in an early learning program is important to help prepare a child for kindergarten, 57% of respondents said it was essential, and nearly 40% of respondents considered enrollment very important. A significant 74 % of respondents believe play is important in a preschool program, but only 2% of respondents would prefer a play-based pre-K program while 84% of respondents preferred a traditional pre-K program.

According to the TBF poll, when stakeholders were asked if it was important for the foundation to invest time, energy, and money, to improve the early learning programs in the community, 93% of respondents reported that it was very important. The same poll also asked participants to rate their priority of the three most important investments the TBF can make in the community, childcare centers ranked third, and pre-K ranked fourth from a list of seven areas.

Qualitative data collected at the end of the survey helped validate the exploratory component of the needs assessment. Survey Monkey performed a text analysis of parent responses to open-ended questions. When asked about what resources in the community help prepare children for kindergarten, many parents cited the library and Head Start. As parents provided their definitions of high quality early childhood education the words that occurred the most were: learning, teachers, children, teach, child, skills, and education (see Appendix G for detailed descriptive statistics).

Research Question Two

What parent beliefs lead to parents enrolling or not enrolling children in early learning programs before kindergarten?

Inferential statistics (logistic regression due to a binary outcome variable) was used to answer this question. The dependent variable was early learning enrollment whether parents enroll or do not enroll their child in early learning programs. The independent variables were parent beliefs and values. I hypothesized that parents' different levels of beliefs and values will be associated with their enrollment – more specifically, when parents have more positive beliefs about early learning and early learning programs, they will be more likely to enroll their children in an early learning program.

The data was exported to the SPSS and recoded to examine an association between parental enrollment and parent beliefs/values using the logistic regression. The results from the logistic regression are found in Table 1.

Table 1

Logistic Regression Analysis of Associations Between Parent Beliefs and Early Learning Program Enrollment (n = 48)

	Enrollment in an Early Learning Program			
Variable	B	SE	OR	Sig.
Is participating in a preschool/early learning program important to prepare your child for kindergarten?	-.78	.66	.46	.23
Is early childhood education important to your child's development?	.87	.94	2.38	.36

Constant	1.67	1.36	5.29	.22
Pseudo R2		.04		

Note. SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio. *p < .05. **p < .01.

The results revealed that there were no significant associations between parental beliefs and their choice to enroll their child in an early learning program. However, it did reveal that there is misalignment between parents' beliefs and their practices.

Research Question Three

What are the perspectives of school-based staff surrounding early learning programs offered in their districts?

The Early Learning Educator Survey provided answers to these questions using descriptive statistics. The key findings are discussed in this section. When asked about child problems (academic, social, home life, etc.) of the children they serve, most responses report that only a few children have these problems out of a class full of children. Most educators report that they have fairly frequent communication with their students' families. Educators and parents speak about issues in the classroom, how to support each other, and how welcomed they feel by one another. About 38% communicate once or twice a week and 38% report that they communicate with parents on most days.

An interesting finding was that 50% of respondents reported they were associated with an accredited program. More than 90% of respondents reported that all children would benefit from attending an early learning program. According to the survey, most educators believe children need the most help in the social foundations domain before they enter kindergarten. Over 80% of educators believed that parenting classes are an important programmatic offering to parents. A significant majority of educators also believed that their school district should incorporate more

play into the school day. As well as, most educators preferred to teach a combination of traditional and play-based early learning classes.

Lastly, the survey asked one qualitative question concerning the best way to educate families about the early learning initiatives and most responses included events, giveaways, frequent communication, and hands-on activities. Descriptive statistics results are summarized in Appendix G. Given early learning educators' beliefs about offering parent support using an array of novel approaches could prove beneficial in increasing readiness skills and would warrant an intervention for parents.

Research Question Four

Do parent beliefs predict parent cognitive stimulation at home?

In this study, cognitive stimulation refers to academic preparation in the home. Preparation can range from reading books to children to singing songs daily. To determine whether there are associations between parent beliefs about early childhood education and parent behavior (cognitive stimulation) at home, a set of linear regression analyses was conducted. The independent variables include one item that measured parent beliefs about early childhood education, and the dependent variables included seven items assessing parent behavior at home and six items measuring parents' belief about specific parent behavior at home. Table 2 shows the results from the regression analyses. I found that there is generally no association between what parents believe they know about early childhood education and what behaviors they display in the home with their children regarding early childhood education. The number of books children have at home was the only dependent variable that was linked to parent beliefs. The degree of parent beliefs about early childhood education was not associated with other parenting behaviors at home. However, the degree of parent beliefs about early childhood education was

significantly associated with the levels of parent beliefs about the importance of specific parent practices at home.

Table 2

Multiple Regression Analysis for Associations Between Parent Beliefs and Home Cognitive Stimulation

	Independent Variable: Parent Beliefs about Early Childhood Education			
Outcome Variables	B	SE	t	Sig.
Parent practices				
Sang songs with your child	.01	.14	.04	.97
Worked on arts and crafts with your child	-.14	.15	-.96	.34
Told your child a story	-.03	.21	-.16	.87
About how many children's books does your child have?	.41	.17	2.33	.02
About how often do you read stories to your child?	.06	.37	.15	.88
Are there rules for your child about homework?	1.62	4.69	.34	.73
Does any adult in your household check to see that homework is done?	3.07	6.68	.46	.65
How important is it to…				
Teach your child the alphabet?	.69	.08	8.41	.00
Teach your child about sharing?	.73	.10	7.61	.00
Teach your child to read?	.65	.09	7.05	.00
Teach your child numbers	.76	.09	8.26	.00
Show your child how to hold a pencil	.77	.10	7.49	.00
Discipline your child when he/she is misbehaving	.61	.13	4.84	.00

Chapter 3

Parent Intervention to Increase Parent Efficacy and School Readiness of Children

Context of Study

Children in a studied urban city are entering kindergarten underprepared, with 58% underprepared in literacy, mathematics, social-emotional development, and physical development in April 2016, as measured by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA, MSDE, 2016). The KRA is administered to all incoming kindergartners enrolled in Maryland public schools within the first thirty days of school. The results of this city's kindergarteners' performance on this assessment illustrate an alarming need for intervention in school readiness when supporting children in the city to successfully transition to kindergarten. School readiness is defined as the cognitive and behavioral aspects of child development and how the child adapts these specific sets of skills acquired before entering kindergarten and its application to the classroom setting (Diamond, Reagan, Bandyk, 2000; Parker et al., 1999), and these skills have long term implications for a child's life (Karoly, 2016). Some specific measures of school readiness include a measure of mathematic, literacy and language, and social skills, physical development, and communication. Traditionally, these specific developmental domains are used to assess how ready a child is when they enter kindergarten.

Recently, a team of researchers at the University of Chicago issued a working paper for publication that reviewed the societal impact (cost-benefit analysis) of two early learning programs that launched in the United States in the 1970s (García, Heckman, Leaf, & Prados, 2016). They found that large investments in the two programs that were studied yielded a cost-benefit ratio of 6.3% and an annual return on investment at 13% yearly (García, Heckman, Leaf, & Prados, 2016). Although the outcomes for male and females varied widely in the areas of

education, employment, health, and crime, participation in early learning programs did positively impact society and not just individuals.

To determine if the current problem of practice was a matter worthy of research, a needs assessment questionnaire for parents of pre-K and kindergarten children within the studied city was distributed in Spring 2016 to gauge parents' beliefs and behaviors concerning early childhood education within their community and their relationship to school readiness. The needs assessment revealed a *disconnection* between parents' beliefs about the importance of early childhood education and parents' behavior that influence school readiness in the home (e.g., how many times parents read to children). The findings informed how research could address the current problem of practice: children in the city are entering kindergarten underprepared as measured by a standardized assessment known as the KRA (MSDE, 2015). Given the findings from the literature that school readiness is connected to parent behavior, I suggest that a parent intervention should be utilized as a tool to address the school readiness of young learners in the city. In the current study, an existing non-research-based parent intervention program, *Bedtime in a Box* (BiaB), will be implemented and tested as a way to examine parent behavior and efficacy and to address the school readiness of children in the city. The BiaB intervention will be discussed in greater detail following the review of the factors that influence school readiness and other parent interventions.

Theoretical Framework

A conceptual framework to guide the proposed intervention to change or shift parents' behavior as it relates to school readiness is Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1978). Bandura asserts that it takes more than simply modeling a specific behavior for someone to imitate the behavior. He suggests that a mediating process occurs in between modeling

behavior (stimuli) and imitating behavior (responses). According to Bandura, four mediating processes influence behavior change. The first is attention. Researchers should ask, does the behavior grab attention; and, if it does, how influential is the behavior that it may lead to imitation. The second factor associated with Social Learning Theory is retention. Is the behavior memorable? If not, it will stifle the chances of the behavior being imitated. This factor is important because behavior change does not occur instantly. It happens over time, and if a person is unable to remember the desired behavior, the response could be jeopardized. The third mediating process is reproduction. Is a person able to reproduce the behavior? People are limited by their own physical and mental abilities. Some behaviors may be nearly impossible for some to replicate. Therefore, it is critical to examine the possible factors that could limit the reproduction for the population targeted for intervention and ensure they are somehow addressed within the proposed intervention. A final factor involved with the mediating process is motivation. Does the benefit of imitating the behavior outweigh the consequence of not imitating the behavior (Bandura, 1978)? According to Bandura, these four mediating processes occur after the stimulus is presented to a person but before the person delivers a response.

It is important to consider Bandura's Social Learning Theory because the proposed intervention is designed to reduce the number of children who are entering the district's public-school system underprepared for kindergarten through a parent intervention. The intervention could alter the current state of school readiness if an effective parent intervention is explored. If the investigative team reviews a variety of parent intervention programs through the lens of Bandura's mediating factors to influence parents' behavior to improve school readiness skills for their children, then the team can position itself to design a study based on a framework that will support the design of the intervention. Ultimately, Bandura asserts that modeling is fundamental

to changing human behavior. BiaB provides parents with the resources they need to model and facilitate routines and reading practices for their children, with the expectation that it will strengthen the connection between the child and parent to increase school readiness skills.

Furthermore, another important framework to consider when selecting a parent intervention is effective parent engagement. Previous research identifies strong parent and community involvement in schools with greater academic achievements for students, increased attendance, and an overall improved quality school experience for all stakeholders (Michael, Dittus, & Epstein, 2007). Therefore, a parent intervention that effectively engages parents is critical to the success of the intervention. A noteworthy framework to gauge the effectiveness parent engagement strategies for intervention is Epstein's six types of parental engagement (Epstein, 1995). Epstein's Six Types of Parental Engagement Framework are 1) Parenting, 2) Communicating, 3) Volunteering, 4) Learning at Home, 5) Decision Making, and 6) Collaborating with Community (Epstein, 1995). The acknowledgement and awareness of Epstein's typology enables education professionals to engage with diverse families throughout various settings (Nathans & Revelle, 2013). Therefore, a parent intervention should consider including one or more of the six types of parent engagement that Epstein suggests.

Environment. School readiness skills in young children are connected to family structure and neighborhood factors (Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, McCarton, & McCormick, 1998). Some indicators that tie the home environment to school readiness are income, highest education level attainment, and single versus two-parent households (Farver, Xu, Eppe, & Lonigan, 2006; Yeung, Linver, & Brooks-Gunn, 2002). Neighborhood factors that affect school readiness include concentrated poverty or wealth, occupations within the community, family structure, and educational attainment (Lapointe, Ford, & Zumbo, 2007; Lesaux, Vukovic, Hertzman, & Siegel,

2007). Given the influences of family structure and neighborhood factors on school readiness, there is just cause to intervene within these two areas. Within the context of this study the two areas are the family structure in an urban environment that is characterized by characteristics associated with poverty. However, research should be targeted and specific, and with the limited resources available, a more feasible intervention would be to intervene within the family structure.

A team of researchers from Pennsylvania and New York investigated whether parents' involvement in the early learning years could moderate the negative family and neighborhood effects on school readiness skills of young children (Kingston, Huang, Calzada, Dawson-McClure, & Brotman, 2013). The authors followed 171 four-year-olds living in a low-income, mixed race, and urban environment. More than 50% of participants self-identified as low-income. Researchers then analyzed data from standardized school readiness scores, parent interviews, teacher reports on parent involvement, and child behavior. (Kingston, Huang, Calzada, Dawson-McClure, & Brotman, 2013). Investigators employed multivariate mixed effects models to determine the relationships between family and neighborhood influences on school readiness and if parent behaviors could moderate those effects. They found parents' involvement with school activities moderated the relationship between family structure (single versus two parents), adaptive skills, and neighborhood socioeconomic resources (Kingston, Huang, Calzada, Dawson-McClure, & Brotman, 2013). Overall, researchers concluded, if education professionals address the issues of resource deprivation at the community, school, and family as well as parents' efficacy in the areas of behavior management then those efforts may prove to be more effective than interventions the primarily focus on parents' engagement with the school only (Kingston, Huang, Calzada, Dawson-McClure, & Brotman, 2013; McLoyd,

1990). In cases where parents are experiencing moments of distress due to economic hardship, positive parenting practices have been shown to be linked with increased school readiness skills for children (Kingston, Huang, Calzada, Dawson-McClure, & Brotman, 2013; McLoyd, 1990).

Given the results of the Kingston et al. (2013) study, it is imperative to consider, and attemt to address if possible, the issues that affect school readiness in a given community. For example, an important consideration for high-poverty urban communities is access to books. Neuman and Celano (2001) found a significant difference in the level of access to books for children when comparing a middle-income to a low-income community. The middle-income community yielded 13 books for every one child, and the low-income community yielded one book for every 300 children who lived in that area (Neuman & Celano, 2001). Given the nature of book access, it is important for children to have immediate access to books in the home due to its relevance to school readiness (Evans, Kelley, Sikora, & Treiman, 2010). Indeed, a large-scale multi-national survey found that a book-oriented environment gives children the skills that are needed to perform well in school (Evans, Kelley, Sikora, & Treiman, 2010). Moreover, having books that are readily available in the home lead to establishing a "scholarly culture - a way of life in homes where books are numerous, esteemed, read, and enjoyed" (Evans, Kelley, Sikora, & Treiman, 2010, p. 6), which could have a positive impact on a child's future (Evans, Kelley, Sikora, & Treiman, 2010).

Parent-Child Interactions. School readiness preparation begins at birth because supporting brain development leads to a strong foundation for learning (Petersen, 2012). The interactions between infants and their parents or caregivers help to build connections in the child's brain that will have influences on the child's future learning (Dodici, Draper, & Peterson, 2003). These interactions include sensitivity, warmth, and conversations. Research suggests that

these types of interactions between the infant and caregiver lead to the academic and social aptitude of young children (Thompson, 2008). Joint attention and self-regulation are two skills that begin to develop as a child transitions from an infant to a toddler. Behaviors including imitation and becoming accustomed to routines are all formed during this period of development correlate with a child's readiness for kindergarten (Carpenter, Nagell, Tomasello, Butterworth, & Moore, 1998). This background information is important because it highlights the importance of parent-child relationships beginning as early as birth and its implications on brain development.

"Every parent in the U.S. will be a child's first teacher and devote time each day to helping such parents' preschool child learn, and parents will have access to the training and support parents need" (103 Congress, 1994). It has become common knowledge for professionals in the field of education for parents to be referred to as a child's first and best teachers (Ramey & Ramey, 1998), as parents are primarily the first adults who children interact and build their initial relationships. However, parents may not be fully aware of the influence they have over their children's futures (Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2011).

A factor underpinning the rituals and routines is the interactions that a parent has with their child. The quality of these interactions has bearings on school readiness skills. Language acquisition is a primary factor in school readiness. The amount of language that non-school-aged children are exposed to at home is associated with vocabulary growth (Hart & Risley, 1995). This research implies that parents should talk with their children regularly to help them expand their language skills. Hart and Risley (1995) suggest that parents with higher incomes tend to speak more to their children more than children with parents who have lower incomes. One strategy to increase the number of conversations that parents have with their little ones is to ensure that parents and children have a strong relationship (Hart & Risley, 1995). In some

families who report lower income levels, children who were read to regularly have better language and cognitive skills at age three than those who were read to occaisionally (Raikes et al., 2006). Therefore, it is important that all parents have and sustain a warm connection with their children because their interactions can lead to children who are more "ready" for school.

The Council on Early Childhood suggests that service providers who interact with children until they reach school age should advise that parents should read aloud with their children because this practice can enrich parent-child interactions (CEC, 2014). The benefits of these interactions are two-fold in that they can strengthen the connections to build brain circuits in children's brains as well as their social-emotional development (CEC, 2014). Moreover, it is important for parents to be cognizant of their positive and negative reinforcement of behaviors. For example, a lack of positive reinforcement of a child's desired behavior or inappropriate discipline practices for undesired behavior have negative implications on a child and is connected to anti-social behaviors (Farrington, 2005). On the other hand, if a parent reinforces desired behaviors and disciplines with warm and (developmentally) appropriate practices, this approach has been associated with positive child outcomes. Ultimately, the literature reinforces the notion that parent-child relationships are an important factor in school readiness as these relationships are related to a child's social-emotional and academic readiness for school.

Relevant Parent Interventions

Two-generation approaches, such as working with a parent and child simultaneously, to address school readiness can prove to be useful in certain settings. Benzies et al. (2014) examined the benefits of a two-generation model preschool program located within a low-income community in Canada designed to promote school readiness. The study was two-pronged in that it examined the effects on both children and parents. For parents, researchers were

concerned with four factors. These factors were navigation of community life skills, parental self-esteem, parenting stress, and risk for child maltreatment and their association with participating in a two-generation preschool program (Benzies et al., 2014). Parents participated in a mandatory parenting/life skills intervention class for five days a week for a total of six weeks. The class was taught by a trained facilitator and covered topics ranging from positive discipline and managing stress to accessing community resources. Parents who required more intervention and support were assigned to the caseload of a school social worker. Researchers found the program to be effective because parents' self-esteem improved, they were better able to navigate community resources, were more amenable to the ideas of positive discipline, and parental stress was reduced. However, the problems with this two-generation model include requiring parents to come in for the program, which is taxing on parents' time and therefore had issues with program attrition.

A highly recognizable parent intervention program is the 12 session Social Learning Theory based Chicago Parent Program (CPP). CPP is designed to increase school readiness by strengthening parent-child interactions and decreasing undesired behaviors in urban communities that are mostly comprised of minority families. Researchers found that parents used less corporal punishment and reported increased parent efficacy as well as more consistent discipline practices (Breitenstein et al., 2012). Although the intervention was found to be effective in multiple studies with minority families who reside in urban communities that display characteristics of poverty (Breitenstein et al., 2012; Breitenstein, Shanes, Julion, & Gross, 2015; Gross, Garvey, Julion, Fogg, Tucker, Mokros, 2008), the drawbacks of the program include high attrition rates by requiring parents to come in for meetings, which can be taxing on their time. With the fast-paced culture in the United States of America and the ever-growing field of distance learning,

there is an opportunity to revise parenting programs to make them more accessible to parents. Parents desire to learn more about being a better parent but do not necessarily have the time to commit to 12 in-person sessions (Breitenstein, Shanes, Julion, & Gross, 2015).

Continuing with the idea of distance learning for parent education, a study was conducted on the effectiveness of an online parent intervention for children with special needs. Curtiss et al. (2015) evaluated the effectiveness of engaging parent in an online platform of the Internet-based Parent Implemented Communication Strategies (iPiCS), adapted from The Online Family Life Education Framework (OFLEF, Hughes, Bowers, Mitchell, Curtis, & Ebata, 2012). Curtiss et al. (2012) study was guided by the OFLEF to explore how distance learning principles can be used for parent programs. Their research questions explored whether or not online technology could be explored to address parent education needs given the importance of the content (Curtiss et al., 2015). Additionally, the researchers were interested in determining how to measure parent progress toward programmatic goal (Curtiss et al., 2015). The researchers developed two resources to help teams who are looking to offer parent education online, including a guide on how to implement adult learning principles within an online platform and a mapping tool to help practitioners decide how to identify potential pitfalls and how to troubleshoot them. Curtiss et al.'s (2015) work is extremely relevant to education teams who are considering non-traditional parent engagement methods in the form of a web-based platform, because as technology evolves, education researchers and practitioners should be aware these changes and use this information to possibly alter their practices to ensure they can actively engage their audiences.

Another important consideration regarding parent intervention programs is cultural and linguistic relevance for certain communities that act as a barrier to effective parent engagement strategies (García-Coll et al., 2002). A group of researchers studied a parent component of

Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS, DeCarlo-Santiago, Fuller, Lennon, Kataoka, 2016) with a Latino population in a school district. CBITS is a 10-session mental health intervention for students who have experienced or witnessed trauma or violence. The CBITS program is designed to prevent or reduce depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders. The creation of the parent component by community partners to CBITS was a school's response to increasing parent engagement and involvement of Latino parents and including them in the psychoeducation intervention for their children. DeCarlo-Santiago, Fuller, Lennon and Kataoka (2016) evaluated the parent component with phone interviews that were recorded, transcribed, and coded. From the codes, three themes above emerged: 1) the need for the program (culturally relevancy), 2) the overall family results from participating in the program (improved communication throughout the household), and 3) the feasibility of the program for families (lack of childcare could hinder participation). This research highlights the need for parent interventions that consider parents' culture and lifestyle demands and additionally incentivizes them for their time. Lastly, the study informs practitioners that family engagement can be effective when families' needs, strengths, and interests are considered in the program design (Gonzalez-Mena, 2005).

Parent Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a term coined by psychologist Albert Bandura in 1978. According to Bandura, efficacy is "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes" (Bandura, 1978, p. 141). Later he states that the power of individuals' beliefs or principles regarding their levels of proficiency will likely impact their ability to effectively cope with life circumstances (Bandura, 1978). Therefore, he argues that individuals tend to avoid situations which they perceive will exceed their coping skills or where they think

they may face an unfortunate outcome. According to Bandura, self-efficacy affects multiple aspects of decision-making. He argues that a person's perceived efficacy can influence the initiating of choice, expectations associated with the choice, and how they will cope and persist through the choice (Bandura, 1978). An important aspect of efficacy that directly translates to the current study is the assertion that efficacy is formed and affirmed through life experiences (Bandura, 1978). The more positive experiences surrounding a given topic, the higher a person's efficacy. Conversely, the more negative experiences surrounding a given topic, the lower the perceived efficacy. These experiences suggest that efficacy is linked to behavior. Given the context of the problem of practice, it is necessary for the investigative team to work with parents to influence their behavior to in turn positively influence their children's school readiness skills.

The notion of intervening with parents to increase their self-efficacy surrounding multiple topics is not a novel topic. In fact, there are many studies across multiple sectors that rely on parents to influence child outcomes in the areas of education, psychology, and medicine (Finch, Griffin, & Edwards, 1974; Guillamón et al., 2013; Mitchell & Fraser, 2014). Parent self-efficacy is a critical component of influencing change in parenting practices as they relate to child development and early learning skill acquisition for children. As the concept of efficacy concerning parents evolved, an operationalized definition was developed. Bandura defines parent self-efficacy as a "parents' beliefs about being able to handle developmentally specific issues and being able to influence their child in a way that fosters the child's positive development and adjustment" (as cited in Glatz & Buchanan, 2015, p.1367).

Home Routines and Rituals

According to Spagnolia and Fiese (2007), routines that occur naturally within the home assist in offering structure which helps to support positive behavior and emotions which support

early childhood development. Additionally, Spagnolia and Fiese (2007) argue that routines and rituals may be closely linked with developmental processes such as parental efficacy, behavior monitoring, and models of family relationships. It is well documented in the literature that reading routines may influence the development of early literacy skills (Fiese, Eckert, & Spagnola, 2005).

Routines involving book reading promote academic success in the later years (Rosenkoetter & Barton, 2002). Moreover, reading books regularly provides more opportunity for parents to begin modeling how to read, identify and practice letters and words, and retell a story, which builds vocabulary. These characteristics are known as "bridges to literacy" (Rosenkoetter & Barton, 2002; Hart & Risley, 1995). Ultimately, routines help to provide children with a "sense of predictability and security, and help with activity transitions" (Bathory & Tomopoulos, 2017, p. 39). Moreover routines at bedtime tend to improve parent-child interactions by decreasing conflict in the family (Sytsma, Kelley, & Wymer, 2001).

With introducing a parent intervention in the home, it is important to consider how it may impact the families' pre-established rules and routines. In summation, parents should buy into (or have stake) in the intervention if they believe that it could change their behavior and positively influence their child's outcome (Buschbacher, Fox, & Clarke, 2004). Thus, families are more engaged in the intervention and are less likely to perceive the interventions as an additional burden to be added onto their day because they are invested in and have planned for incorporating the routine in their daily lives (Marshall & Mirenda, 2002).

Benefits of reading to children at home. Biological embedding is defined as the long-term effects of the quality of nurturing and cognitive stimulation during the early learning years (Hertzman, 1999). During the primary years (birth to 5), when biological embedding occurs, pre-

K aged children are most vulnerable to disparities not only to cognitive stimulation, but exposure to spoken language, fostering child-parent relationships, and book reading (Tamis-Lemonda, Flynn, Rovira, Tineo, & Mendelsohn, 2006). Additionally, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, we know that the greatest amount of brain growth occurs between the ages of zero to five (Hutton, Horowitz-Kraus, Mendelson, DeWitt, Scott, & Holland, 2015). Moreover, factors associated with a child's home literacy environment, including access to books and reading practices, have an impact on children's concepts of print and promotion of oral language (Hutton, et. al., 2015).

Reading to children in the home helps to increase brain activity as evidenced by magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Researchers studied the brain function of 3- to 5-year-old children while they were being read to using a regression model, and they found a correlation between being read to in the home and activation of brain regions that support mental imagery and narrative comprehension. These biomarkers help inform models of emergent literacy, a critical component of school readiness (Hutton et al., 2015). Children who arrive at school with decreased reading readiness skills tend to have issues later in their schooling careers (Gabrieli, 2009). Those issues have a greater societal cost (Hernandez, 2011).

Therefore the work of Neuman and Moland (2016) sought to gain a better understanding of the implications of book deserts for urban intensive environments in Los Angeles, Detroit, and Northeast Washington, DC, focusing on the consequences on families' access to books. Book desserts refer to neighborhoods or communities that have a lack of print rich resources (books), which have major implications for the well-being of families (Neuman & Moland, 2016). The current study, highlights the structural issues in an environment that affect school readiness as opposed to the individual or familial issues. Urban intensive refers to "broader environments,

outside of school factors such as housing, poverty, and transportation are directly connected to what happens inside of the school" (Milner, 2012, p.559) with the consideration of typically about one million residents.

Moreover, researchers found that increased income segregation could affect a child's school readiness because it may impact a family's access to resources, such as books, to support the child's learning. Income segregation, also known as socioeconomic residential sorting, contributes to the book deserts because the ability to afford housing is closely connected to income (Neuman & Moland, 2016). The researchers argue that people live where they can afford to live. These researchers found that children who reside in areas with concentrated poverty have one book to share with 37 children; whereas more affluent communities offer approximately 13 books per child to share or purchase (Neuman & Moland, 2016). Neuman and Moland's findings suggest that living in a community where concentrated poverty is present and where books are scarce, could contribute to the opportunity gap before children enter school (Neuman & Moland, 2016). According to Neuman and Moland (2016), when there are little to no presence of books within a child's environment, reading books is reduced to an occaisional occurrence rather than a standard routine practice (Neuman & Moland, 2016, p. 19). Therefore, it is important to consider access to books in communities with low incomes when a school readiness intervention is designed because not having consistent and ongoing access to books will certainly affect school readiness.

Importance of sleep in the preschool years. Sleep is oftentimes a routine that parents tend to overlook. More research asserts that bedtime routines are linked to higher academic achievement and better health outcomes for children (Ferretti & Bub, 2017). However, when children routinely engage in optimal sleep duration, they are associated with having higher

school readiness skills than their children who are sleep deprived. Children with sleep deprivation are associated with attentional concerns and lower school readiness (Tso et al., 2016).

Sleep problems in children ages five and under are fairly common as reported by approximately 25% of parents (Bathory & Tomopoulos, 2017). Problems in young children's sleep is associated with maladaptive behaviors, obesity, and a decline in academic performance (Bathory & Tomopoulos, 2017). Moreover, these sleep problems can cause a strain on family well-being. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children ages three to five to should sleep for 12-15 hours each night (Bathory & Tomopoulos, 2017) and that parents should begin promoting good *sleep hygiene* and a bedtime routine while a child is in the stages of infancy (Bathory & Tomopoulos, 2017). However, parents may find it difficult to establish a consistent bedtime routine due to the demands of their lifestyles as well as societal ideologies that do not allow for families to maintain routines such as dinner time or bedtime (El-Sheikh, Buckhalt, Cummings, & Keller, 2007; El-Sheikh, Kelly, Buckhalt, & Hinnant, 2010). Good sleep hygiene promotes school readiness by allowing children to be fully alert and rested in the daytime (Hale, Berger, LeBourgeois, Brooks-Gunn, 2009). Ultimately, adequate sleep impacts school readiness because it is positively correlated with higher attention/functioning in full-day early learning programs (Vaughn, Elmore-Staton, Shin, & El-Sheikh, 2015).

Tooth brushing in preschool. Oral health is an important contributor to overall health of a child (Nasir & Nasir, 2015). According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), tooth brushing should occur two times a day (AAPD, 2013). Home self-care (brushing, flossing, and rinsing) is the leading prevention to tooth decay. According to Walker, Steinfort, Keyler (2015), the timing of the routine is also important. They suggest that the timing of the

self-care relative to eating and sleeping is important to preventing tooth decay (Walker, Steinfort, Keyler, 2015).

Furthermore, Shaghaghian, Bahmani and Amin (2015) suggest that children's oral health was associated with parents' beliefs about oral care. Therefore, it is important for parents to buy in to the practice of supporting their children with oral care practices in the home. For parents who may not practice ideal oral care for themselves, Karimi-Shahanjarin, et al., (2016) assert that providing families with resources (psychological or environmental) may help parents' intentionality surrounding their child's oral care. Huebner and Milgrom (2015) conducted a study to examine an intervention that support parents' practice of brushing the teeth of their infants and children two times a day. Using data from community focus groups, researchers designed a four-week program to implement in an early learning center. Using a non-randomized pre- to post-test design, researchers found evidence to suggest that early childhood settings are in the best position to deliver low-cost tooth brushing programs to encourage and share the benefit of oral care to help parents and children develop the healthy habit (Huebner & Milgrom, 2015).

Attendance and Preschool

For many years, SEAs only measured attendance by tracking unexcused absences, also known as truancy (Chang, Russell-Tucker, Sullivan, 2016). Over time, SEAs began to examine in-seat time and found that some students were absent from school more that the data collection protocol revealed (Chang, Russell-Tucker, Sullivan, 2016). This oversight meant that many students were missing school and falling behind academically. According to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (2016), nearly 6.5 million American students are chronically absent. Today, chronic absenteeism is a primary indicator for student success. A student is

considered to be a chronically absent if he or she has missed 10% of school or more in one school year (Chang, Russell-Tucker, Sullivan, 2016). Although preschool is not a mandatory, Connolly & Olson (2012), found that chronically absent preschoolers could contribute to low reading achievement, increased retention rates, and continued poor attendance in the upper grades. The research team suggests more profound effects on children who live in low-income areas whose primary source for literacy instruction could be the public school (Connolly & Olson, 2012).

During school year 2011-2012, a Connecticut urban school district faced abysmal chronic absentee numbers within their student body. Less than half of their students had a satisfactory attendance record of 95%. District officials utilized six key strategies to help improve those numbers. Of those six, there are three that appeal directly to early childhood education. They are *home visits, parent engagement activities and communication, and community partnerships* (Chang, Russell-Tucker, Sullivan, 2016). Although the district improved chronic absenteeism rates from grade K-8, the greatest impact in the kindergarten grades. Kindergarten decreased the chronic absenteeism rate from 30% to 18% in school year 2012-2013 and increased the reading level of students from 43% in January 2013 to 52% in May 2013 (Chang, Russell-Tucker, Sullivan, 2016).

Although uncommon knowledge, chronic absenteeism is common among preschool students (Erlich, Gwynne, Allensworth, Fatani, 2016) because preschool is not associated with compulsory age. Students who are from low-income families, have a single mother, or identify as a minority tend to have higher rates of absenteeism. A major concern in the early learning community is that enrollment in high quality programs may not be enough to set students on the road to readiness if their attendance is poor. According to Erlich, Gwynne, Allensworth, Fatani

(2016), attending school consistently is a foundational marker of student learning. Therefore, it is important to alleviate barriers that could prevent children from being in school – on time each day. This concern of absenteeism is just cause for intervening with parents to ensure that children are well rested and ready for school to learn.

Bedtime in a Box (BiaB) Parent Intervention

Due to the presence of a research gap regarding an association between family routines (e.g., regular book readings, sleep, and tooth brush) and positive outcomes for children's first year of kindergarten, more attention should be directed to family routines and their influence on school readiness (Ferretti & Bub, 2017). Research suggests that family engagement during the preschool years is connected to children's success in kindergarten (Graue, Clements, Reynolds, & Niles, 2004) and parents who participate in preschool activities have children who are more prepared for school when compared to parents who do not participate in similar activities (McWayne, Hahs- Vaughn, Cheung, & Green, 2012). We know that parents' engagement with cognitive activities with their pre-school aged children improves school readiness skills and fosters an academic advantage (Schaub, 2015). Prior research also asserts that family routines could be an important tool for helping both children and families for the transition to kindergarten (Ferretti & Bub, 2017).

The research supporting parent involvement in boosting the school readiness skills of young learners is compelling. The literature supports the assertion that parents' behavior plays a critical role in preparing their children for kindergarten. It is the expectation that Bedtime in a Box (BiaB) will influence parent efficacy and behaviors to support family routines as it relates to school readiness as well as increase the school readiness skills of children. The selection of BiaB

was based on the literature review process and the presentation of new approach to parent interventions in an urban city.

BiaB focuses on improving the school readiness skills of children and strengthening parent-child relationships in the home by encouraging reading in the home with the embedding of rituals and routines (Bolte, 2016). This parent-facilitated intervention utilizes the contents of the box to build routines, increase parent-child relationships, and foster a love of reading (Bolte, 2016). The contents of each box include a stuffed animal, pajamas, five new books, foam bath letters and numbers, soap, toothbrush, timed toothpaste, alarm clock, and a daily routine log (Bolte, 2016). The contents within the box serve as resources to support parents as they help to prepare their children for school.

According to Bathory and Tomopoulos (2017), bedtime routines should last no longer than 30-40 minutes. During this time, the similar activities should occur such as bathing, soft singing, and reading in a calm and quiet atmosphere. The current study will use a parent intervention known as BiaB as a tool to facilitate bedtime routine. BiaB supports this effort by providing developmentally appropriate books for children to read at home. The box also provides a washcloth, bath towel, and pajamas to assist with bath time routines.

The literature also warns us that chronic absenteeism is prevalent amongst preschoolers (Chang, Russell-Tucker, Sullivan, 2016; Connolly & Olson 2012). Additionally, attending school on time every day lays a strong foundation for learning (Erlich, Gwynne, Allensworth, Fatani, 2016), therefore, BiaB provides a support to parents by including an alarm clock. The clock can be used to signal the start of the bedtime routine as well as a signal to start a routine to get ready for school. Lastly, the literature also suggests that tooth brushing is vital to a child's overall health and well-being (Nasir & Nasir, 2015). The literature also supports the notion of

parents' facilitation of a home care routine where brushing, flossing, and rinsing becomes a naturally occurring routines to prevent tooth decay (Walker, Steinfort, Keyler, 2015). Therefore, BiaB provides a timed tooth brush and tooth paste for children. BiaB is a strategically assembled box that is designed to support the assertions from the literature of what parents can do help their children become more school ready. Although the idea of using a *box* as an intervention is novel to US culture, there has been a growing movement to use *boxes* to house resources to support parents with their children.

As mentioned, a newer trend in parent interventions is the use of comprehensive "boxes." Arguably, the oldest "box" intervention is the Finland Baby Box distributed to Finnish mothers to support the transition from pregnancy to motherhood. For over 60 years, the Finnish government has provided parents with a box filled with material (baby clothing, the box serving as the child's bed, and bottles) for the mother to use as she adjusts to motherhood (Pulkkinen, 2012). Since its initial distribution to Finland's society, this home-based intervention has helped the infant mortality rate in Finland to sharply decline from 65 out of 1000 live births to in the 1930s to two out of 1000 live births in 2015 (TWB, 2016). This "box" program still exists in Finland, and the mortality rates have remained low. Due to its success, the "box" intervention model is currently being implemented in South Africa and is known as the Thula Baba Box, in London and Scotland as the Baby Box, and in California as a part of the Welcome to Parenthood - Alberta project (Anonymous, 2016; Murphy, 2016; Pienaar, 2015; Ridky, 2016). These "box" intervention programs are currently under study by multiple universities. The various implementation efforts of the "box" model throughout the world lends support to justify a program study of this approach to parent interventions for school readiness. Studies have not yet been published on the effectiveness of these newer boxes, but are in progress.

Although the proposed BiaB intervention does not address all six of Epstein's parental engagement framework, it does incorporate four of the six recommendations. The four components include parenting (practices), communicating (check-ins with the parent), learning-at-home (home-based intervention), and collaborating with the community (funded by community organizations).

This intervention is home-based, meaning that all implementation is done in the home, but is supported by the school. In order to facilitate interactions between parents and the school throughout the intervention process, I revised the communication component of BiaB by incorporating periodic check-ins with parents. Lastly, a fraction of the BiaB intervention boxes were paid for by community organizations to support early learning initiatives in the city to ensure a close connection to Epstein's Six Types of Parent Engagement.

BiaB also provides five free books in each box, and those books are replenished after three months. If a family elects to receive a refresher box, the family will receive an additional five books. Given the potential issue of access to children's books that some urban areas may face, BiaB can help to address the structural issues in the city that may affect children's access to books in the home and school readiness. A lack of books in the community does not foster a familiarity and love for books and thus does not begin to establish book reading as a routine. Throughout the preschool years, routines and rituals need to include developmentally appropriate activities that should begin in the home. BiaB supports this assertion by providing families with the tools needed to help establish rituals and routines as a normed behavior in the home.

This home-based intervention does little to infringe on the personal lives of parents. Moreover, research suggests that parent interventions should be sensitive to parent culture and lifestyles. Researchers plan to address some of the cultural needs for non-English speakers or

those who speak English as a second language by offering materials (books, recording sheets) in both Spanish and English.

Furthermore, BiaB utilizes the idea of parents being children's first and best teachers by offering a schedule to support parents with implementing a routine and increasing positive parent-child interactions (Kaiser and Handcock, 2003). Given the description of BiaB content, the general idea of utilizing a "box" in the home as an intervention as well as the selected components of the box to justify its use. The literature suggests that investing in early childhood education yields return on investments (García, Heckman, Leaf, & Prados, 2016; Karoly, 2016). Similarly, this review of the literature has also reinforced the importance of having access to books, reading in the home and establishing rules and rituals because these practices help prepare children for kindergarten. Lastly, by creating routines and rituals with reading each night, these research-based, developmentally appropriate practices should ultimately influence the school readiness skills of city's youngest learners through an increase in parent self-efficacy skills in the area of school readiness.

Conclusion

Parents' parenting styles are not concrete and are flexible to change (Taylor & Biglan, 1998). Families are the principal influencers for preparing their children for school (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). School readiness is the collective obligation amongst all adults who interact with the child. This includes families, schools, and community partners. School readiness is a worthwhile topic to investigate because school readiness skills have implications for a child's life. Per the literature, school readiness is a major factor related to the opportunity gap in the United States because it levels the education playing field for children to have an equal opportunity for academic success. According to Ramey and Ramey (1998), when children

enter school behind their peers, it is difficult to close the gap. Additionally, the relationship between school readiness and parent involvement is a close one (Barnett & Ackerman, 2006). Moreover, research suggests that "interventions to boost family involvement may be a critical piece when trying to support children's early learning" (Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013). Research reveals that partnerships between the school and home serve as a foundation for parent engagement that can hone or foster such as parent led literacy-based and other learning opportunities (Iruka, Gardner-Neblett, Matthews, & Winn, 2014); therefore, a case can be made for parent programs, such as BiaB, as an intervention to address school readiness in the city.

Chapter 4

Intervention Procedure and Program Evaluation Methodology

Introduction

A current study examined an urban city's youngest learners entering kindergarten underprepared according to the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA, MSDE, 2016). The KRA is a test of school readiness skills in areas of literacy and language, mathematics, socio-emotional, and physical development. A needs assessment conducted in Spring 2016 found a disconnection between what parents knew about school readiness preparation in the home versus what parents actually did in the home to prepare children for kindergarten. The finding revealed a need in this community to support parents with implementing what they know to do with their children to prepare them for school with a resource (BiaB) that will not infringe too heavily on their daily schedules.

To address the disconnection between parents' knowledge and practice of school readiness, the current study is designed to evaluate the Bedtime in a Box (BiaB), a worthy at-home parent intervention. BiaB focuses on improving school readiness skills of children while simultaneously growing parent-child relationships. This is achieved by encouraging reading in the home while embedding nightly rituals and routines (Bolte, 2016).

The current study examined the effectiveness of BiaB (Bolte, 2015), a parent intervention designed to increase rituals and routines in the home with the expectation that parents will increase their parent efficacy regarding school readiness perceptions and behaviors and children will increase their school readiness skills. The BiaB program was administered between October 2017 and April 2018 in one title-one school by the school administrators. Services available in

the title-one school include referrals to utility assistance, mental and health services, as well as a food bank.

Intervention: Bedtime in a Box

According to Kaiser and Handcock (2003), "parents are children's first and most endearing teachers" (p. 9). BiaB is a model intervention to address the problem because it capitalizes on the idea of parents being children's first and best teachers. It offers structure to support parents with implementing a routine that incorporates literacy, healthy habits, and positive parent-child relationship building interactions for school readiness. The current study is concerned with BiaB's ability to effectuate shifts in literacy outcomes and positive home environments by supporting caregivers to utilize the contents of the box to build routines, increase parent-child relationships, and foster a love of reading (Bolte, 2016).

The contents of each BiaB include five new developmentally appropriate books, a set of pajamas, a shower gel, a washcloth, a bath towel, toothbrush, toothpaste, alarm clock, foam letters and numbers, stuffed animal, and a daily routine log with stickers to track progress, (Bolte, 2016). Each component of the box was selected to establish an ongoing bedtime routine in the home. In addition to the academic component (books and foam numbers and letters), which the research team believes will increase school readiness skills, are the practical elements of a healthy and efficient bedtime routine. Therefore, the BiaB includes the basic components for a hygienic bedtime this includes taking a bath, brushing teeth, and getting ready for bed with pajamas and a stuffed animal.

In January 2018 (three months after an initial box was distributed for each participant), the boxes were refreshed with new books, and hygiene materials. At that time, parents returned

to the school to pick up the refresher kit. Throughout the intervention, parents accessed technical assistance from the school-based team, as well as retrieved refresher kits for their boxes.

Hypothesized short-term outcomes associated with BiaB include (a) routines and rituals built into the home environment, (b) parents read more with their children in the homes through repetition and exposure, (c) increase in parent engagement with school sponsored activities. Medium-term outcomes are: (a) an increase amount of time parents read to children at home, (b) enrich parent-child relationships, (c) improved scores on the Early Learning Assessment (ELA), and (d) an improved parent – school relationship. Long-term outcomes are: (a) parents' increased school readiness efficacy and increased child school readiness awareness and skills, (b) increased number of pre-K students in the city receiving the BiaB, and (c) ongoing partnerships and collaboration between educators and parents throughout child's academic career. The current study offered flexibility with the term parents. For some families, parents may not be the individual responsible for a bedtime routine. Therefore, the term parent will include a primary caregiver. This person could be the child's parent but could include a grandparent, older sibling, aunt, uncle or baby sitter.

Working Definitions of Key Study Outcomes

Findings from the literature support the following operationalized definition indicators of school readiness for the current study.

Parent efficacy of school readiness. Parent efficacy refers to "parents' *beliefs* about being able to handle developmentally specific issues and being able to influence their child in a way that fosters the child's positive development and adjustment" (as cited in Glatz & Buchanan, 2015, p.1367). Bandura (1978) suggested that individuals' self-efficacy changes their choice and behaviors. Parents' *perceptions* of their ability to parent successfully (Jones & Prinz 2005) has

been associated with parent motivation to *engage* in more effortful discipline, increased parenting warmth and lower hostility (Coleman & Karraker 1998; Jones & Prinz 2005).

Increased reading at home. An amount of reading at home will be defined and measured by the number of hours parents read for their child each day. Research suggests that reading at home will strengthen school readiness skills for young learners. Routines involving book reading promote academic success in the later years (Rosenkoetter & Barton, 2002). Moreover, book reading provides more opportunity for children to begin modeling how to read, identify and practice letters and words, and retelling a story which builds vocabulary (Rosenkoetter & Barton, 2002).

Increased school readiness. School readiness is defined as the cognitive and behavioral aspects of child development and how the child adapts these specific set of skills acquired before entering kindergarten and its application to the classroom setting (Diamond, Reagan, Bandyk, 2000; Parker et al., 1999). This includes children's cognitive, social, emotional, behavioral, and physical development.

Parent–child relationships. Parent-child relationships are characterized by behaviors such as reading, reviewing the alphabet, and practicing number counting with the child (Barnett & Taylor, 2009). BiaB is a parent facilitated intervention where parents utilize the contents of the box to build routines, increase parent-child relationships, and foster a love of reading (Bolte, 2016). According to published research, warm, supportive, and responsive relationships are related to a host of school readiness indicators (Connell & Prinz, 2002).

Child perspective on school readiness and intervention. Student perspectives are often overlooked in research. However, qualitative research studies have demonstrated that children as young as four years old can provide insights into their daily lives and experiences (Irwin &

Johnson, 2005). As a part of the evaluation outcome, using an ethnographic approach, intervention students will be asked what their perceptions are regarding BiaB and school readiness. Students were questioned about their experience with the intervention as well as their perspective on school readiness skills (i.e., what it means to be ready for kindergarten).

Following routines. BiaB is an at-home parent intervention that facilitates a "supportive home-based involvement . . . enables the child to successfully participate in learning or school activities, such as . . . adhering to bedtime routines, and establishing rules and expectations for school performance (Manz, Gernhart, Bracaliello, Pressimone, & Eisenberg, 2015, p. 182). Spagnolia and Fiese (2007) suggest that family routines and rituals that occur naturally in the home help to structure that will support positive behavior and emotional stability that helps to support develop in the early years. The family routines defined in this study to support children's school readiness include having a bath (daily), wearing pajamas (provided in the box), brushing teeth (for two minutes), reading books (how many minutes read), and having good night (record the actual time when parent/caregiver leaves the room) every day as evidenced by the BiaB checklist in Appendix I and Appendix J.

Research Questions

Specific research questions are:

1. Will families' participation in Bedtime in a Box improve children's school readiness?

To what extent families follow the intervention routines measured by the BiaB fidelity checklist?

Will a degree of the fidelity of implementation be associated with children's school readiness at the post-intervention?

What are pre-K children's perspectives regarding the Bedtime in a Box and school readiness?

What are parents (or primary box users)' perspectives regarding the Bedtime in a Box?

Will families' participation in Bedtime in a Box increase parent (or primary caregiver) efficacy perceptions as well as parenting practices concerning school readiness?

Will a degree of the fidelity of BiaB implementation be associated with parents' efficacy and school readiness practices at the post-intervention?

Method

Participants

This study employed a quasi-experimental pre- and post- test with non-randomization comparison approach. Pre-K families and children in a title one school providing funding for the BiaB implementation served as an intervention group and pre-K families and children in a matched neighbor school served as a comparison group. In order to reach as many families as possible, all students and families who were implementing the BiaB at home were asked to participate in the intervention group. The comparison school was selected based on the school information found on the school district's website to match student demographics and school characteristics. These characteristics included the number of pre-K classes, number of students enrolled in the pre-K classes, ethnicity demographics, and the Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) rate. The pre-test and post-test scores of measures were compared between the intervention and the comparison group. Research participants were recruited in February 2018.

Participants for this study included 56 pre-kindergarten children and their parents in total. A total of 36 parent-child dyads from an intervention school participated in the intervention group and the other 20 parent-child dyads from a comparison school comprised the comparison group. For the intervention group, if there was more than one person who was using the BiaB with the student, then the person who was primarily responsible for facilitating the bedtime routine was asked to complete pretest and posttest surveys. Participating children were between

the ages of four and five years (mean age = 56 months, SD = 4.4), and 44% of children were female and 56% were male. Students were 69.2% Black, 28% Latinx, and 2.8% White. There was no age restriction for the parent or guardian. The average income for parents was $20,001-$25,000 and the average parent education level was a high school diploma or GED. Comparison group demographics reveal that 45% of children were female and 55% were male and 100% of students were Black. There was no age restriction for the parent or guardian. The average income for parents was $15,001-$20,000 and the average parent education level was a high school diploma or GED. The only requirement to participate in the comparison study was for the parent-child dyad was for the child to be enrolled in the participating school pre-K program. Student attendance data information was collected at the end of the school year.

Given the target population of parents of incoming pre-K students, all students in other grades and their parents were ineligible to participate in the study. Participants were required to have students who attended a city pre-K in one of two previously selected Title 1 (high Free and Reduced Meals) schools. A power analysis revealed that this study requires a sample size of approximately 51 parents per group (intervention and comparison) with a medium effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.5$). However, both pre-K programs only had 40 families due to a limit of 20 students for each pre-K class (two pre-K classrooms in each school). This limited access to participants reduced the power to detect the effectiveness of the intervention. Among 40 families, 90% of the parents consented to participate in the study from the intervention school, and 50% of the parents from the comparison school agreed to participate in the study. Lastly, 95% of the parent survey respondents identified that they were either the child's mother or father.

Process Evaluation Plan: Fidelity of Implementation

Although the Bedtime in a Box (BiaB) program study measured the parenting efficacy or the degree to which parents are implementing the bedtime routine, it was not classified as an efficacy study because the research questions are focused on learning the effectiveness of the program on parent and student outcomes in a real pre-k setting. Fidelity of implementation was particularly important to this study because the entire intervention is delivered in homes with no direct supervision. Therefore, it was important to closely monitor parents' implementation of BiaB using multiple methods. To conceptualize the measurement of the fidelity of implementation for the BiaB effectiveness study, I adapted the five areas of criteria needed for fidelity of implementation as defined by O'Donnell (2008) as a form of fidelity measurement. These five areas of criteria are as follows:

> "(a) adherence—whether the components of the intervention are being delivered as designed; (b) duration—the number, length, or frequency of sessions implemented; (c) quality of delivery—the manner in which the implementer delivers the program using the techniques, processes, or methods prescribed; (d) participant responsiveness—the extent to which participants are engaged by and involved in the activities and content of the program; and (e) program differentiation—whether critical features that distinguish the program from the comparison condition are present or absent during implementation (O'Donnell, 2008, p.34)."

For this study, all five areas of O'Donnell's recommendations for fidelity of implementation were considered. The study did not compare "conditions" extant during the implementation of BiaB that are not represented in the checklist. Rather, the study aimed to discover if parents are implementing the specific measures represented in the checklist.

Working definition for "fidelity of implementation." For this study, I used one of the working definitions of fidelity of implementation found in Holiday's (2014) research. Holiday (2014) refers to fidelity of implementation as the ‘‘extent to which an enacted program is consistent with the intended application model’’ (Century, Rudnick, & Freeman, 2010, p. 202). This definition is concise and accurately defined my purpose for conducting a study of this parent-based intervention. The indicators identified in this study helped the investigators determine whether parents implement this program to fidelity (using five areas the checklist) as intended by the creator and defined by the researchers. If implemented with fidelity, the research team expected to observe positive outcomes for both parents and children in school readiness.

More specifically, current fidelity indicators were aligned to the short-term and medium-term study processes BiaB logic model. The logic model in Appendix K suggested that parents would demonstrate increased parent efficacy and increased implementation of school readiness practices in the home and children would improve their demonstration of school readiness skills if parents followed the intervention protocol as designed. The indicators of fidelity of implementation were operationalized in a subsequent section to further assist with comprehension of the logic model.

What constitutes "high fidelity" versus "low fidelity"? The intervention utilized a five-point checklist, which was completed by parents in the implementation process. The items on the checklist are: Bath (recorded with a checkmark), Pajamas (recorded with a checkmark), Brush Teeth for two minutes (recorded with a checkmark), Read (recorded with the number of minutes parents read), and Good Night (recorded with their actual bed time; turn off the light or no more talking). The checkmark was used to denote that the process was completed. The fidelity checklist was adapted from the original BiaB checklist designed by the creator of BiaB,

who shared a summary of interviews with multiple parents throughout the city regarding the checklist. To rigorously measure the fidelity of implementation, the original checklist was revised to record the number of minutes read in place of simply placing a checkmark in its place. This change will measure the quality of implementation for the book reading portion of the checklist. Additionally, the intervention site had a small number of Latino students (n = 10), therefore, the original BiaB checklist was modified to include Spanish instructions. This small change prevented families from declining to participate due to a language barrier but help to reinforce the notion that they too are valuable members of the school community. Please refer to Appendix I to view the revised fidelity checklist. Parents received a pre-assembled packet of checklists with pre-labeled dates that correspond to which week they should be completing their checklists.

I conjectured high fidelity as a parent who implements BiaB five or more nights a week with five out of five checklist items. Medium fidelity was characterized as a parent who implements BiaB three to four times a week. Low fidelity was characterized as a parent who implements BiaB one to two times a week. For the bed category, if a child had consistent bedtime throughout a week (fell asleep within an hour time frame daily), it was considered as high fidelity; if a child had inconsistent bedtime, it was coded as low fidelity. There is cultural flexibility for the "bath" measurement on the checklist as some parents choose to bathe their children in the morning than at night. If a parent did not respond to the checklist at all after two weeks of implementation, the participant was dropped from the fidelity analyses.

Parents were introduced to the intervention and the fidelity checklist during the 100% attended parent orientation. Parent attendance at the parent orientation was a critical component of meeting the adherence criteria for the fidelity of implementation because parents were directly

trained on how to implement BiaB to fidelity. The parent orientation was conducted by a BiaB developer, and Felicia Jones, the previous school administrator and researcher. During this session, parents learned the expectations for having a box in the home. A major goal of the orientation was to engage parents. The meeting facilitators led the parents through a mock bedtime story to ensure they are not only reading to the children, but asking them thought-provoking questions throughout the reading experience.

Indicators of fidelity of implementation. The primary goal of this research study was to determine whether having the BiaB at home has positive effects on parent efficacy with school readiness and student school readiness skills. Research suggests interventions that boost family involvement may be a critical component when attempting to address children's early learning (Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013). Moreover, Spagnolia and Fiese (2007) argue that family routines and rituals may be closely linked with developmental processes such as parental efficacy, behavior monitoring, and models of family relationships. Capturing these developmental processes are critical in determining if parents are establishing routines in the home and demonstrates why the BiaB checklist was used to capture information to determine if parents are implementing the intervention to fidelity. If they were not implementing BiaB to fidelity, the checklist was able to categorize the level of the fidelity according to the predetermined scale of low, medium, and high. Please refer to Appendix L to view how investigators supported parents in implementing the intervention to fidelity with the data collection matrix.

Evaluation Measures

Children's school readiness. The current study used multiple measures to assess students' school readiness**.** The primary school readiness measure was the Early Learning

Assessment (ELA), which was administered to all pre-K students three times throughout the pre-K year in the school district. All participating parents agreed for researchers to look up their children's data. Due to test security, no sample items are shared with the public. At present, the district is waiting for the state to release the reliability and validity of the ELA. This assessment was piloted in school year 2016-2017. However, a document provided by a Quality Assurance Specialist from MSDE reveals that the ELA is an *ongoing assessment* using the definition of content validity as justification to use the tool to assess children's skills using the research-based MSDE learning standards developed for the *Ready For K* initiative.-The computerized ELA data was received by the studied city's school district Office of Early Learning. The data points were collected before the intervention began (pre-test) in September 2017, during the intervention (mid-test) in February 2018, and after the intervention was completed (post-test) in June 2018. I estimated reliabilities using the current study sample data for each domain: Cronbach's alphas were .97 for Social Foundations; .84 for Language and Literacy; .87 for Mathematics; and .58 for Physical Well-Being and Motor Development.

To interpret the data, please refer to Figure 1.

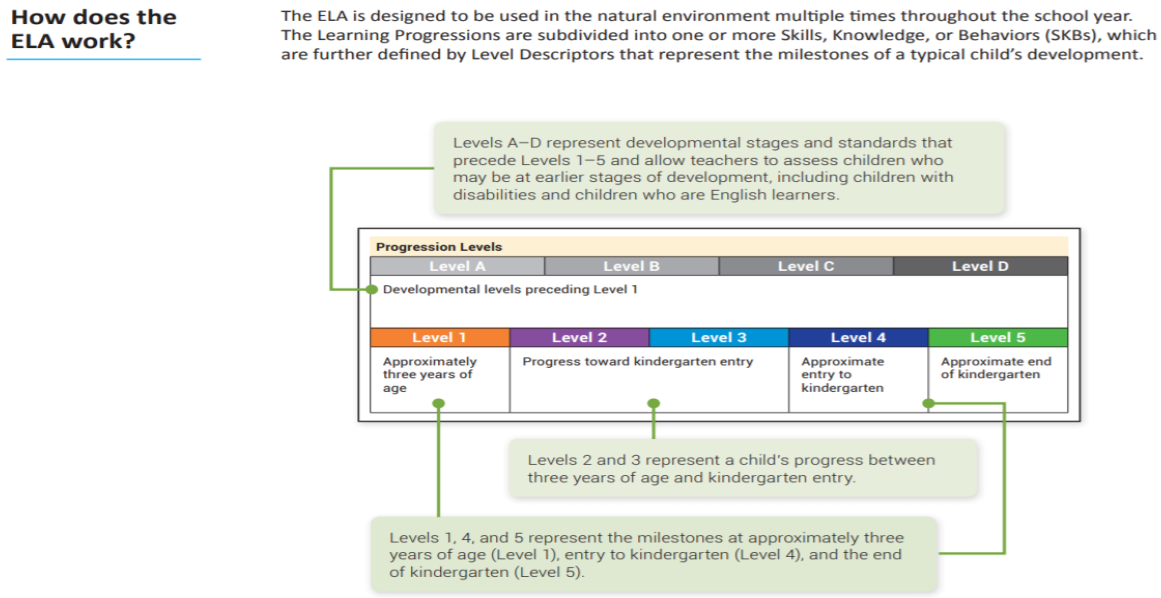


Figure 1. Early Learning Assessment (ELA) Scale

(Retrieved from: https://pd.kready.org/data/ck/sites/247/files/ELA%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf)

Furthermore, to directly measure children's receptive vocabulary (Manz, Gernhart, Bracaliello, Pressimone, & Eisenberg, 2015) and behavioral self-regulation (Mashburn & Henry, 2004), which are indicators of children's school readiness, I utilized two validated measures, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test III (PPVT-III, Dunn & Dunn, 1997), and the Head-to-Toes Task (Diamond & Taylor, 1996). The PPVT-III has been well validated in the literature to measure children's receptive language skills and verbal ability (Barnett et. al., 2008; Benzies et al., 2014; Hur, Buettner, Jeon, 2015). An iPad was used to conduct the computer-based PPVT-III with each child. Refer to Figure 2 for an example item of the PPVT-III. The Head-to-Toes Task (Pointz et. al., 2008) includes 10 items observing children's memory, attention, and control. Head-to-Toes is a type of self-regulation assessment that have been associated with predicting achievement in the areas of literacy, math, and vocabulary acquisition in young children (Pointz et. al., 2008). An assessor conducted this task with each child in a quiet room and a child was

asked to touch their head when asked to touch their toes; and touch their toes when asked to touch their head. The child will earned 2 points if a correct answer was made; 1 point if an answer was self-corrected; and 0 point if an incorrect answer was made (Diamond & Taylor, 1996). The PPVT and Head-to-Toes were completed at mid-point (March 2018) and after the intervention (June 2018).

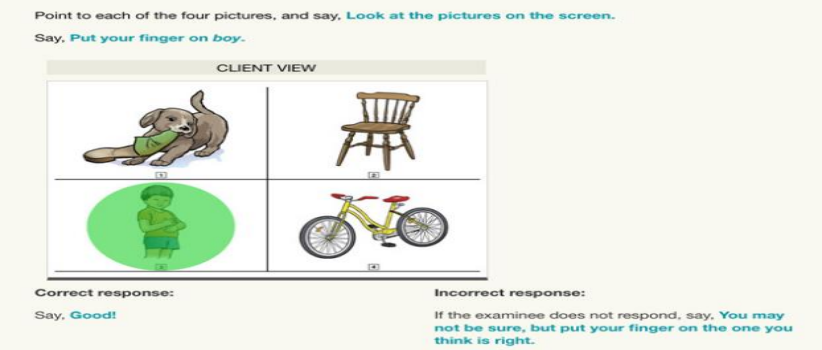


Figure 2. Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test III (PPVT-III) Vocabulary Card (Retrieved from: http://www.pearsonassess.ca/static/q-interactive/vision-ppvt-4.htm)

Child attendance. Attendance data was collected at the end of the study to determine if BiaB influence school attendance rates. This data was collected from the school secretaries of participating schools. Figure 3 shows the school year 2016-2017 Attendance and Truancy guidelines from the study's school district.

Strategies from each of the following tiers must be present at every school:

Tier 1 – Universal Prevention Strategies: These strategies are intended to create a culture of regular attendance in the school.

- Ensure that the school has a safe, supportive and welcoming school climate.
- Use data to monitor student absences and identify students struggling with attendance early
- Develop an attendance incentive program that acknowledges and rewards students, parents and staff for perfect, good and improved attendance
- Use ParentLink to notify parents/guardians of every absence

Tier 2 – Early Intervention Strategies: These strategies are intended to support students who are showing early warning signs of absentee problems (5-10 absences).

- School staff member communicates in person with the student upon his/her return to inquire about the absence(s) and offer support
- School staff member calls parent/guardian and offers support. Consider calling at various times of the day and evening
- Mail an attendance letter to the parent/guardian reinforcing the importance of daily attendance, expressing concern and offering support. A sample letter can be found on Infinite Campus.
- School staff member and/or community partner should conduct a home visit. Consider visiting the home at various times of the day and in the evening

Tier 3 – Targeted Intervention Strategies: These strategies are intended to support students who are struggling with daily school attendance (11- 14 absences).

- Schedule an administrative attendance conference with the parent/guardian
- Refer student to Student Support Team (SST) or IEP team
- With support from SSL's and community partners, develop individualized interventions to address specific barriers to attendance (such as flexible scheduling or student mentoring) See attendance toolkit for additional strategies

Tier 4 – Re-engagement Strategies: These strategies are to be implemented as a last result when prior interventions have been unsuccessful (15 or more absences):

- If absences are due to barriers such as a lack of clothing, insufficient family funds, childcare challenges, or health issues, a referral to Department of Social Services/Family Preservation Specialists should be offered to the family.

Figure 3. Guidelines for schools to follow based on the number of student absences. (Retrieved from: http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cms/lib/MD01001351/Centricity/Domain /8955/16-17%20attendance%20guidance%20pugh.pdf)

Child perspectives. It is noteworthy to mention that I explored an ethnographic approach to learn about children's perspective to school readiness. According Irwin & Johnson (2005) children as young as four years old can provide insights into their daily lives and experiences. I randomly selected six pre-K students by selecting names from a box who participated in the

intervention to ask them questions for an ethnographic component of the study to determine their perceptions of school readiness. Children were interviewed outside of the pre-K classroom on the last day of school. The six children were asked the following questions:

1. What excites you about going to kindergarten next year?
2. What scares you about going to kindergarten next year?
3. Do you think you're going learn anything new in kindergarten next year?
4. What was the best part about BiaB?
5. Would you want to keep doing BiaB every night?

Parent efficacy and practices. Acknowledging a disconnection between what parents know to do with their children for school readiness and what they actually do in the home for school readiness revealed by the needs assessment, this study included a combination of measures given to parents at the mid and post timelines to assess their parent efficacy and practices.

Parents were asked to respond to the items asking about their household routines and home environment. The Home Observation of the Environment-Short Form (HOME-SF, Mott, 2004) was used to measure how parents stimulate cognitive development and the learning environment of the home. The Short Form of this measure includes questions that assess cognitive and emotional practices between children and parents in the home. For the current study, parents were asked 10 questions associated with cognitive practices. In addition, the Confusion, Hubbub, and Order Scale (CHAOS) will be used to measure confusion, routines, and chaos in the home. There are two versions of CHAOS. The original version (Metheny et al., 1995) and the shortened version (Pike et. al, 2006; Coldwell et. al, 2006). Due to the number of measures used for the study, I used the short form version of CHAOS (six items) to learn about

families' level of chaos in the home. In the literature, this short form scale predicted parenting efficacy, parenting stress, and children's developmental outcomes (Hur, Buettner, Jeon, 2015; Petrill et al. 2004). Example items include "The children have a regular bedtime routines," and "It's a real zoo in our home." Lastly, questions from the Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC) will be used in the parent questionnaire. This measure was designed to measure a parent's self-esteem in parenting their child (Girbaud-Wallston, 1977). The PSOC measures parent efficacy and satisfaction. According to Johnston and Mash (1989), Wallston and Wandersman (1978) reported alpha coefficients of .82 (satisfaction) and.70 (efficacy) for the reliability. For the current study, the eight item short form of the measure was used (Cutrona & Troutman, 1986) with a Cronbach's alpha of .72. The 23 item parent was distributed to the intervention and comparison parents in English or Spanish (see Appendix M). The current sample had the Cronbach's alphas of .56 for HOME-SF, .75 for CHAOS, and .60 for PSOC.

Parent perspectives. Lastly, parents were asked questions about their experience with BiaB during informal in-person check-ins throughout the study period. Anecdotal notes were analyzed and coded to determine if there are common questions that parents raised about BiaB or if there are any common problems that parents face with implementing the intervention.

Study Procedure

Intervention group. The recruitment process for the intervention group consisted of marketing the research study to parents through an early learning center implementing a Bedtime in a Box to all pre-K parents. However, to participate in the study, parents elected to opt-in to the study. Parents who opted in to participate in the study received their mid-test measures. Their BiaB fidelity checklists were also collected by the researchers after they consented to participate

in the study. After the intervention was completed in April 2018, the parents received their post-test measures.

Children in the intervention group were administered the PPVT-III and the Head-to-Toes Task after their parents gave permission during the intervention (mid-test) and at the end of the intervention period by the research team. Additionally, children were administered the ELA during pre, mid, and post intervention by school district teachers. In addition, six children were randomly selected and interviewed by the primary researcher, Felicia Jones, at the end of the intervention.

Comparison group. Families in the comparison group were recruited from a neighboring title one school with similar demographics to the intervention school. Students whose parents gave permission were administered the PPVT-III and the Head-to-Toes at the same time (mid-test and post-test). Additionally, the ELA scores from the comparison group were collected, analyzed, and compared to the intervention group. Parents were also asked to take mid-test and post-test measures to compare with the intervention group. Table 4 shows a summary of the data collection timeframes for each measure.

Table 4

Data Collection Summary

		Pre-Intervention (BOY)	Mid-Intervention (MOY)	Post-Intervention (EOY)
Child-Level Measures	ELA	ν	ν	ν
	PPVT		ν	ν
	Head-to-Toes		ν	ν
	Child Interview			ν (only intervention group)
Parent-Level Measures	Parent Survey		ν	ν
	Fidelity Checklist	ν	ν	ν

Note. BOY = beginning of the year; MOY = mid of the year; EOY = end of the year.

Data Analysis Plan

A design incorporating qualitative and quantitative approaches provided a big picture and would be the most appropriate approach to explaining findings and trends. Since the research questions explore parent beliefs and perspectives as well as student achievement on a standardized assessment, a mixed-methods approach was used to examine the effectiveness of BiaB. The quantitative methods include three separate data collection periods throughout the school year for children and two for parents. For the comparison and intervention with parents, parents or other primary BiaB users were asked to complete a survey asking about parents' efficacy, well-being, and current parenting practices. For children, they completed a series of assessments during the same data collection period as their parents with the research staff. Students were thanked for their time with a book of their choice and a small gift (crayons and a coloring book at MOY and finger puppets at EOY) for participating in the assessments at each time. Due to BiaB's novel status, this study is classified as an effectiveness trial. This classification is important because it means that it will take place in a real-world environment.

I have chosen several research questions to explore the effectiveness of BiaB as a worthy intervention to promote school readiness, therefore it is important to consider the six continua described in Newcomer, Hatry, and Wholey (2010) to ensure that the approach to evaluating BiaB is comprehensive, practical, and well-defined. The findings from this study were used to determine whether or not this parent intervention is a useful tool for the city pre-K programs to invest in to promote school readiness for young learners.

The first continua item from Newcomer, Hatry, and Wholey (2010) refers to how the intervention will be measured. The current study employs both formative and summative evaluations. For example, this study is formative because a major goal of the study is to determine if there is a need to alter a component of the box or checklist to improve the overall implementation of BiaB to yield higher parent efficacy reports and student skill level regarding school readiness. Additionally, the study is summative because a logic model was used to design the study to determine the expected short-term to long-term outcomes. The next continua item refers to the research paradigm.

This study employed a mixed-methods approach. While most of the research questions require quantitative data (parent questionnaires, checklists, and ELA data), there is a question to assess student perspectives regarding school readiness. Randomly selected students' responses participating in the ethnographic component of the study were recorded and later transcribed onto an electronic coding notebook. Using the coding notebook template (see Appendix N), the students' responses were analyzed by searching for common themes in the student responses. Using the coding notebook common themes were identified and color-coded. Using the colored themes, primary code and sub codes if applicable. Anecdotal notes from parent-researcher interactions served as an additional qualitative component to the study and be used to compare

parent and child perspectives as well as inform a strategy for supporting parents in implementing the program to fidelity. ELA scores for both the intervention and the comparison group were collected throughout the course of the school year for analysis.

The fourth component of this design is how the investigators participated in the study. For example, the researchers facilitated an orientation to BiaB because the primary researcher was previously a school administrator. This orientation covered the purpose of the intervention, how and when to use BiaB, and discussed technical assistance. This was the extent to which the investigator will participate in the study, as parents are the primary facilitators of BiaB with their children. Lastly, this program evaluation was goal-based and problem-oriented. The problem of school readiness in the studied urban city has many implications on the outcome of a child's life. The research reveals that intervention with parents for this age-group has shown to be promising. Therefore, the careful selection of this home-based parent intervention should ultimately increase parent efficacy around early learning behaviors and children's school readiness skills.

Quantitative data (parent surveys and child assessments) was analyzed using two methods. A set of repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if there is a statistical difference in parents' efficacy and school readiness practices and children's ELA scores and PPVT-III and self-regulation task of pre-, mid- and post-data between intervention and comparison groups. To analyze the association between the BiaB participation and children's pre-K attendance, the attendance variable was regressed on the intervention/comparison status. To determine whether or not the parent involvement (fidelity of implementation) influenced parent and child outcomes, intervention group parents' and children's mid- and post-test scores were separately regressed on the fidelity status. To analyze the fidelity status, I only used the fidelity checklist completed between October 2017 to

December 2017 for 12 weeks before the winter break began. I chose to include only 12 weeks because winter break serves as a natural time to break from activities during the academic year. The response rate for the fidelity checklist dramatically decreased after winter break. Also, according to Lally, van Jaarsveld, Potts, and Wardle, (2010) 12-week study with 96 participates, it takes approximately 66 days to establish a new habit as a regular routine. Therefore, upon the 12-week mark, enough time would have elapsed for BiaB to become a routine within the home environment.

Conclusion

According to Strosberg and Wholey (1983, p.66), three key conditions lead to better program performance. The first being that program objectives are well-defined. BiaB has clear program goals to increase parent-child relationships and promote literacy practices in the home. If these targets are met, the expectation is for parents to improve their efficacy skills around early learning school readiness in the home and to increase school readiness skills for students. The next condition is program objectives are plausible. A program evaluation of BiaB is likely to achieve program objectives because the intervention will be done in the home. There is evidence that many parent interventions are unsuccessful because parents' schedules do not align with the time of program offerings (Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013) and there was built in check-in to provide technical assistance to parents throughout the intervention. Additionally, the last of Strosberg and Wholey's (1983) conditions refer to the intended use of the information findings of the program evaluation. Lastly, research suggests that interventions that are culturally competent hold promise when strengthening the relationships between family and school (Iruka, Winn, Kingsley, & Orthodoxou, 2011). It is the assumption that the partnership between family and school will lead to increased school readiness of kindergarteners. Puccioni (2015) suggests

that an intervention where educators share their knowledge and best practices about school readiness with *at risk* families could have a positive impact on school readiness skills. The findings from this program evaluation of BiaB could help to inform the strategy of the school district's Office of Early Learning and possibly the Office of Family Engagement to invest in programs that are found to increase school readiness and parent efficacy.

Chapter 5

Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the BiaB parent intervention and its influence of parents' self-efficacy skills and student outcomes associated with school readiness. The intervention occurred in from October 2017 to April 2018. The research questions outline the study's findings and discussion and how they connected to prior research. The next section will review the limitations of the study as well as implications for future research and approaches to practice. Lastly, the conclusion will review recommendations for urban public school districts with culturally and linguistically diverse learners to increase the school readiness of students through parent intervention.

The researcher collected qualitative and quantitative data to explore the relationship between parent practices and its relationship to student school readiness. The research questions are:

1. Will families' participation in Bedtime in a Box improve children's school readiness?
2. To what extent families follow the intervention routines measured by the BiaB fidelity checklist? Will a degree of the fidelity of implementation be associated with children's school readiness at the post-intervention?
3. What are pre-K children's perspectives regarding the Bedtime in a Box and school readiness?
4. What are parents' perspectives regarding the Bedtime in a Box?
5. Will families' participation in Bedtime in a Box increase parent (or primary caregiver) efficacy perceptions as well as parenting practices concerning school readiness?

6. Will a degree of the fidelity of BiaB implementation be associated with parents' efficacy and school readiness practices at the post-intervention?

Research Question One

Will families' participation in Bedtime in a Box improve children's school readiness?

To answer research question one, descriptive statistics for the PPVT and the Head Toes assessments were administered at the middle of the year (MOY) and end of the year (EOY) (see Table 5.1). The ELA assessments were administered in the beginning of the year (BOY), MOY, and EOY (see Table 5.2). Lastly, student attendance data was analyzed to determine if any patterns in attendance rates were present (see Table 5.3).

PPVT. I first estimated children's age-standardized mean scores at MOY and EOY and examined whether there was a statistical difference between intervention group and comparison group children's scores. Using mean averages to differentiate student performance on the PPVT assessment, the results revealed no statistical difference in their achievement on the PPVT at MOY nor EOY. Descriptive statistics show that during MOY or Time 2 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 90.89, the comparison group mean was 86.89, and the total mean was 89.56. Within this period there presented with a 4 point difference in favor of the intervention group, however, the difference was not statistically different using the *t*-test. Descriptive statistics report that during EOY or Time 3 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 97.03, the comparison group mean was 92.71, and the total mean was 95.82. Within this period there presented with a 4.32 point variance in favor of the intervention group, however, the difference was not statistically different using the *t*-test. The results of ANOVA also showed that there was no difference between intervention and comparison group children in

improvement of PPVT scores between MOY and EOY. The left panel of Figure 5.1. illustrates the mean growth patterns for intervention (red line) and comparison (blue line) groups.

Head to Toes. Using mean averages as mean to differentiate student performance on the Head to Toes assessment, the mean score variations between the comparison group and intervention group revealed a noticeable difference in their achievement on the Head to Toes. Descriptive statistics report that during MOY or Time 2 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 13.47, the comparison group mean was 10.71, and the total mean was 12.69. Within this period there presented with a 2.76 point variance in favor of the intervention group, which was not statistically different. Descriptive statistics report that during EOY or Time 3 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 14.94, the comparison group mean was 10.80, and the total mean was 13.75. Within this period there presented with a 4.14 point variance in favor of the intervention group. The EOY or Time 3 assessment period was significantly higher for the intervention group than the comparison group with a t-test score of -1.98 ($p < .05$). As shown in Figure 5.1., the intervention group (red line) shows more growth than the comparison group (blue line). However, the ANOVA results showed that there was no significant difference between intervention and comparison group children in growth of Head to Toes scores between MOY and EOY.

Table 5.1

Descriptive Statistics for the Vocabulary and Behavioral Self-Regulation Assessments

		Total	Intervention Group	Comparison Group	t-test
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	statistics
PPVT age-standardized	Time 2 (mid-test)	89.56 (16.49)	90.89 (13.73)	86.89 (21.18)	-0.84 (n.s.)
	Time 3 (post-test)	95.82 (14.99)	97.03 (13.24)	92.71 (18.99)	-0.91 (n.s.)
Head-to-Toes	Time 2 (mid-test)	12.69 (7.40)	13.47 (7.07)	10.71 (7.91)	-1.27 (n.s.)
	Time 3 (post-test)	13.75 (6.93)	14.94 (6.01)	10.80 (8.44)	-1.98*

Note. Pre-tests were not conducted. n.s. = not significant at $p < .05$ level. *$p < .05$.

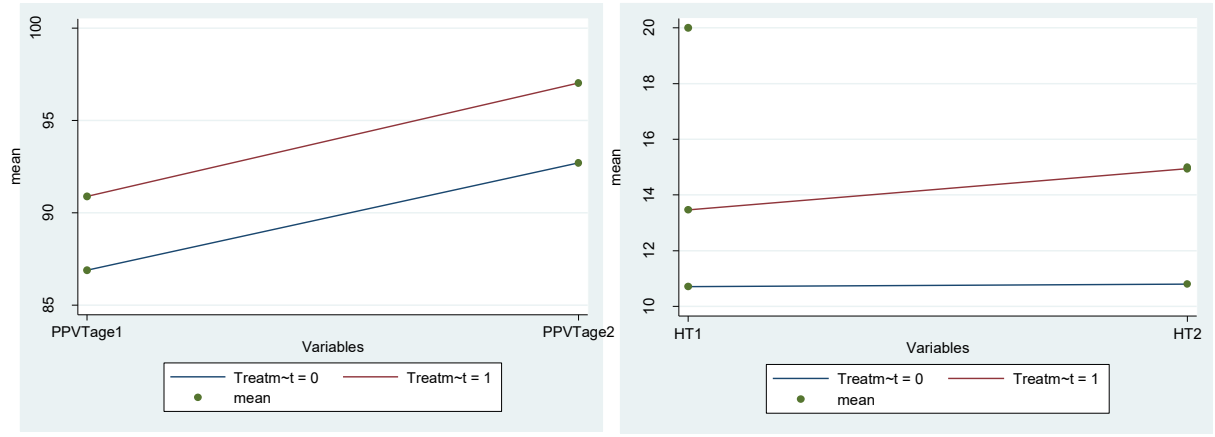


Figure 5.1. Illustration of growth patterns for the vocabulary and behavioral self-regulation assessment. Blue lines represent the comparison group and red line represents the intervention group. The left figure shows the PPVT scores and the right figure shows the Head-to-Toes scores.

ELA. ELA data were collected during the BOY (September 2017), MOY (February 2018), and EOY (June 2018), respectively for both intervention and comparison groups in the following domains Social Foundations, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, and Physical Wellbeing and Motor Development (see Table 5.2).

Social foundations. Using mean averages as mean to differentiate student performance on the ELA Social Foundations domain, the mean score variations between the comparison group and intervention group reveal significant variations in performance – comparison groups performed better than the intervention at all time points, however, the mean difference at EOY became marginally significant. Descriptive statistics report that during BOY or Time 1 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 1.21, the comparison group mean was 2.37, and the total mean was 1.60. Within this period there presented with a 1.16 point variance in favor of the comparison group. Descriptive statistics report that during MOY or Time 2 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 2.45, the comparison group mean was 3.20, and the total mean was 2.72. Within this period there presented with a 0.75 point variance in favor of the comparison group. Descriptive statistics report that during EOY or Time 3 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 3.61, the comparison group mean was 3.94, and the total mean was 3.73. Within this period there presented with a 0.33 point variance in favor of the comparison group. The mean scores revealed a statistically significant findings between the intervention and comparison group as it relates to Social Foundations with the intervention group consistently closing the variance gap in the means average during each assessment period. The repeated measures ANOVA indicated a significant effect of time, $F(2, 56) = 247.7$, $p < .001$, and a significant interaction of time and intervention, $F(2, 54) = 8.95$, $p < .001$. This indicates that BiaB significantly improved intervention school children's social foundations over time, compared to the comparison group. Figure 5.2 shows the interaction between time and intervention for Social Foundations.

Literacy and language. Using mean averages as mean to differentiate student performance on the ELA, descriptive statistics report that during BOY or Time 1 assessment

period that the intervention group mean was 2.22, the comparison group mean was 2.26, and the total mean was 2.22. Within this period there presented with a 0.04 point variance in favor of the comparison group. Descriptive statistics report that during MOY or Time 2 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 2.99, the comparison group mean was 3.19, and the total mean was 3.06. Within this period there presented with a 0.20 point variance in favor of the comparison group. Descriptive statistics report that during EOY or Time 3 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 4.10, the comparison group mean was 3.70, and the total mean was 3.95. Within this period there presented with a 0.40 point variance in favor of the intervention group. The mean scores revealed a statistically insignificant findings between the intervention and comparison group as it relates to Literacy and Language. However, the intervention group scored below the comparison group during BOY and MOY assessments but made gains with a higher mean score during the EOY assessment period. The mean differences at BOY, MOY, and EOY were not statistically significant, however, the repeated measures ANOVA indicated a significant effect of time, $F(2, 56) = 227.51$, $p < .001$, and a significant interaction of time and intervention, $F(2, 54) = 8.41$, $p < .001$. Figure 5.3 shows the interaction between time and intervention – both groups began with similar scores, however, the intervention group performed better at EOY.

Mathematics. Using mean averages as method to differentiate student performance on the ELA, descriptive statistics report that during BOY or Time 1 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 2.06, the comparison group mean was 2.35, and the total mean was 2.16. Within this period there presented with a 0.29 point variance in favor of the comparison group. Descriptive statistics report that during MOY or Time 2 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 2.91, the comparison group mean was 3.48, and the total mean was

3.12. Within this period there presented with a 0.57 point variance in favor of the comparison group. Descriptive statistics report that during EOY or Time 3 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 3.98, the comparison group mean was 4.23, and the total mean was 4.07. Within this period there presented with a 0.25 point variance in favor of the comparison group. The mean scores revealed a statistically significant differences between the intervention and comparison group as it relates to Mathematics, however the difference between two groups at EOY became marginally significant, reducing the gap between the groups. The repeated measures ANOVA indicated a significant effect of time, $F(2, 56) = 369.84$, $p < .001$, and a significant interaction of time and intervention, $F(2, 54) = 3.37$, $p < .05$. Figure 5.3 shows the interaction between time and intervention for Mathematics.

Physical wellbeing and motor development. Using the mean average as a method to detect variation between the intervention and comparisons groups, I found that the mean difference at BOY became not significant at MOY and EOY.. Descriptive statistics report that during BOY or Time 1 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 2.45, the comparison group mean was 2.83, and the total mean was 2.58. Within this period there presented with a 0.38 point variance in favor of the comparison group. Descriptive statistics report that during MOY or Time 2 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 3.85, the comparison group mean was 3.67, and the total mean was 3.79. Within this period there presented with a 0.18 point variance in favor of the intervention group, however, this difference was not statistically significant. Descriptive statistics report that during EOY or Time 3 assessment period that the intervention group mean was 4.45, the comparison group mean was 4.38, and the total mean was 4.44. Within this period there presented with a 0.07 point variance in favor of the intervention group, however, this difference was not statistically significant again.

The mean scores revealed a statistically insignificant findings between the intervention and comparison group at MOY and EOY as it relates to Physical Wellbeing and Motor Development. The repeated measures ANOVA indicated a significant effect of time, $F(2, 56) = 274.93$, $p < .001$, and a significant interaction of time and intervention, $F(2, 54) = 7.08$, $p < .01$. Figure 5.4 shows the interaction between time and intervention – the comparison group had a higher mean at BOY, however, the gap was significantly reduced by the intervention.

Table 5.2

Descriptive Statistics for the Early Learning Assessment

Developmental Domain	Time	Total	Intervention Group	Comparison Group	
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	t-test statistics
Social Foundations	Time 1 (pre-test)	1.60 (0.75)	1.21 (0.14)	2.37 (0.85)	7.77***
	Time 2 (mid-test)	2.72 (0.74)	2.45 (0.5)	3.20 (0.86)	4.07***
	Time 3 (post-test)	3.73 (0.81)	3.61 (0.83)	3.94 (0.76)	1.49+
Language and Literacy	Time 1 (pre-test)	2.22 (0.61)	2.22 (0.64)	2.26 (0.56)	0.16
	Time 2 (mid-test)	3.06 (0.70)	2.99 (0.68)	3.19 (0.70)	1.07
	Time 3 (post-test)	3.95 (0.82)	4.10 (0.71)	3.70 (3.23)	1.78
Mathematics	Time 1 (pre-test)	2.16 (-0.01)	2.06 (0.54)	2.35 (0.43)	1.95*
	Time 2 (mid-test)	3.12 (0.65)	2.91 (0.60)	3.48 (0.57)	3.43***
	Time 3 (post-test)	4.07 (0.54)	3.98 (0.46)	4.23 (0.65)	1.63+
Physical Wellbeing and Motor Development	Time 1 (pre-test)	2.58 (0.40)	2.45 (0.24)	2.83 (0.52)	3.59***
	Time 2 (mid-test)	3.79 (0.64)	3.85 (0.63)	3.67 (0.66)	-0.88
	Time 3 (post-test)	4.44 (0.49)	4.45 (.44)	4.38 (0.57)	-0.70

+$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

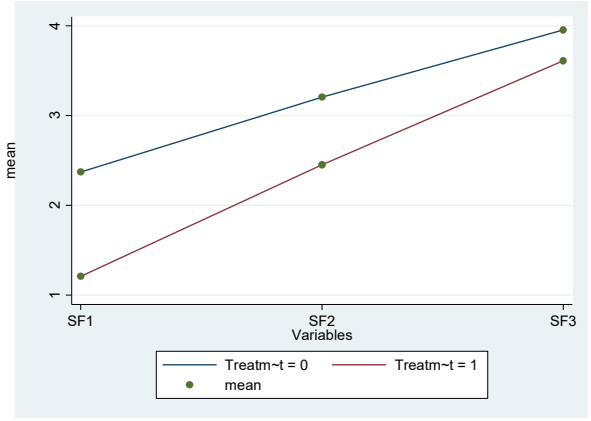


Figure 5.2. Illustration of growth patterns for ELA social foundations. Blue lines represent the comparison group and red line represents the intervention group.

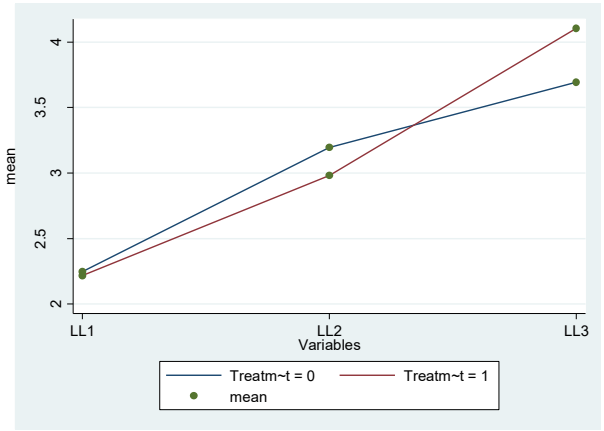


Figure 5.3. Illustration of growth patterns for ELA language and literacy. Blue lines represent the comparison group and red line represents the intervention group.

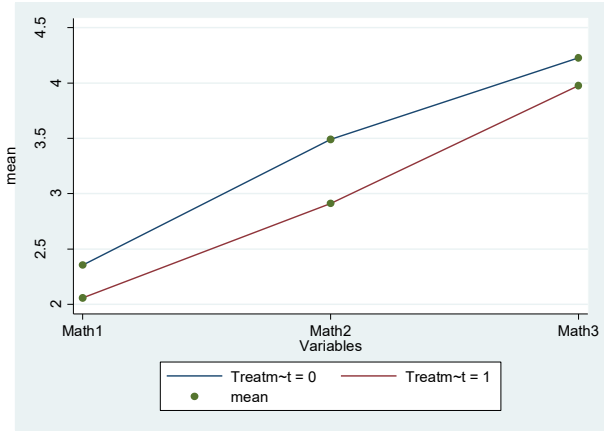


Figure 5.4. Illustration of growth patterns for ELA mathematics. Blue lines represent the comparison group and red line represents the intervention group.

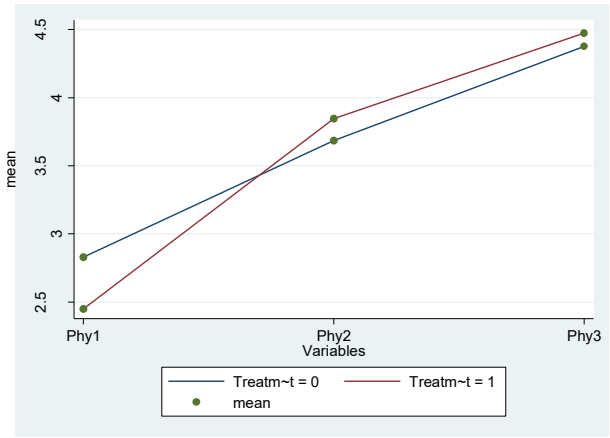


Figure 5.5. Illustration of growth patterns for ELA physical health and motor development. Blue lines represent the comparison group and red line represents the intervention group.

Attendance. The end of the year attendance rates for children in both the intervention and comparison groups were not significantly different (see Table 5.3). The average number of days a student missed in the intervention group was 12.78. The average number of days missed from a student in the comparison group was 11.00. The total average of days missed across both groups was 12.19. The subsequent regression analysis also revealed that the intervention status

did not predict days of absence. Although the variation between means are statistically insignificant, it should be noted that the school district classifies student attendance into three tiers to determine student risk for truancy and low achievement. According to *Figure 3*, attendance in PreK for both intervention and comparison sites would qualify as a Tier III intervention and support for attendance. Tier 1 denotes a 90% - 100% attendance rate, Tier II denotes an 80% - 90% attendance rate, and Tier 3 denotes below 80% attendance rate. There were a total of 176 instructional school days within the district. Therefore missing 17.6 or more days of school would lead to a Tier II, Tier III, or Tier IV classification.

Table 5.3

Child Attendance

	Total	Intervention Group	Comparison Group	
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	t-test statistics
Days of absence	12.19 (10.23)	12.78 (1.77)	11.00 (2.27)	-0.60 (n.s.)

Note. n.s. = not significant at $p < .05$ level.

Research Question Two

To what extent do families follow the intervention routines measured by the BiaB fidelity checklist? Will a degree of the fidelity of implementation be associated with children's school readiness at the post-intervention?

Among the 36 families who participated in BiaB intervention group, 24 families (67%) returned at least one checklist that measures the fidelity of intervention. The checklists for 12 weeks until December 23, 2018 before the winter break began were analyzed. A total of three families completed checklists for all (12) weeks and 15 families completed more than a half of the lists (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4

Fidelity of Intervention

	Bath	Pajamas	Brush	Read	Bedtime
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Low fidelity	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (4.17%)	6 (25.0%)
Medium fidelity	4 (16.7%)	1 (4.2%)	1 (4.2%)	4 (16.7%)	-
High fidelity	20 (83.3%)	23 (95.8%)	23 (95.8%)	19 (79.2%)	18 (75.0%)

Note. A total number of minutes families read for a child, on average, was 81 minutes weekly (SD = 40.2). If a student had a consistent (within one hour) bedtime, the bedtime was coded as 1 and if there was inconsistent bedtime, the bedtime category was coded as 0. A medium fidelity category did not exist. If a child had consistent bedtime in more than a half (six) of the weeks, the fidelity was considered as high.

Children's school readiness outcomes, including four ELA domains, head-to-toes, PPVT age standardized scores, and attendance, were regressed on the degrees of fidelity of intervention in bath, pajamas, brush, read, and bedtime. None of the fidelity of intervention indicators were significantly associated with children's school readiness outcomes. Additionally, the number of minutes families read for a child did not significantly predict children's school readiness outcomes. I also examined whether the completion of the BiaB checklist was associated with children's school readiness outcomes. When families submitted at least one BiaB checklist, children's absence days were significantly lower (β = -8.46, SE = 3.51, $p < .05$). No other school readiness outcomes (ELA data) were predicted by the completion of the BiaB checklist.

Research Question Three:

What are pre-K children's perspectives regarding the Bedtime in a Box and school readiness?

Student responses were recorded on the last day of school to ascertain their opinions about their transition to kindergarten and BiaB. The student responses were recorded and

transcribed to a word document. The transcription was then transferred to a coding chart (See Appendix N). Interview questions were asked to six students from the intervention group.

As a result of the student interviews, four primary themes emerged: 1) language and literacy, 2) hygiene, 3) growing up, and 4) feelings. As it relates to the transition to kindergarten, the children appear to be interested in learning about language and literacy concepts as evidenced by their excitement surrounding learning new site words and writing new words but expressed a range of emotions regarding being afraid to cry in kindergarten to being happy about being in kindergarten. The questions related to BiaB garnered an unanticipated response with a connection to hygiene. The children expressed that their favorite parts about BiaB were the washcloths or soap and the anticipated favorites – the books. Lastly, all children reported that they would like to continue BiaB every night.

Research Question Four

What are parents (or primary caregiver's)' perspectives regarding Bedtime in a Box?

The purpose of the parent orientation was achieved as 100% of participating families attended the orientation to learn how to use the box and the purpose of the study. Four families transitioned from the intervention school and were unable to complete the study. When the researcher called caregivers via phone or in-person check-in meetings to determine if technical assistance was needed, parents consistently responded that the family is growing accustomed to the new routine or has adjusted to the new routine. A consistent question was, "When are we going to get new books?", citing that the family grew weary of reading the same rotation of five books each night. Parents were excited to learn that they would receive refresher kits with five additional books. Another important finding was that many parents apologized for not returning

the checklist, they reported that once the routines became automatic, the checklists "got in the way" of the routines.

Research Question Five

Will families' participation in Bedtime in a Box increase parent (or primary caregiver) efficacy perceptions as well as parenting practices concerning school readiness?

The effectiveness of parents participation in BiaB was mixed as it relates to parenting practices (refer to Table 5.5). The CHAOS measure, which assesses the climate and functionality of the home, produced insignificant findings when the mid-test means and post-test means were analyzed. The mid-test mean rating for the intervention group was 1.78 and comparison group mid-test mean rating was 1.94. The mid-test mean rating for both groups was 1.84. The post-test mean rating for the intervention group was 2.14 and the post-test mean rating for the comparison group was 2.24. The mean post-test rating was 2.18. The ANOVA revealed an insignificant effect of time on CHAOS and an insignificant interaction between intervention and time (see Figure 5.6).

Table 5.5

Descriptive Statistics for the Parent Responses

		Total	Intervention Group	Comparison Group	t-test
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	statistics
Household chaos (CHAOS)	Time 2 (mid-test)	1.84 (.56)	1.78 (.56)	1.94 (.51)	1.06 (n.s.)
	Time 3 (post-test)	2.18 (.36)	2.14 (.40)	2.24 (.28)	1.03 (n.s.)
Parenting competence (PSOC)	Time 2 (mid-test)	5.17 (.54)	5.23 (.57)	5.06 (.45)	-1.14 (n.s.)
	Time 3 (post-test)	5.05 (.73)	5.36 (.58)	4.57 (.68)	-4.44***
Cognitive stimulation (HOME-SF)	Time 2 (mid-test)	7.19 (1.59)	7.11 (1.33)	7.35 (2.03)	0.55 (n.s.)
	Time 3 (post-test)	6.23 (2.68)	6.53 (2.50)	5.71 (2.95)	-1.11 (n.s.)

[a]higher scores represent higher levels of chaos.
n.s. = not significant; ***$p < .001$

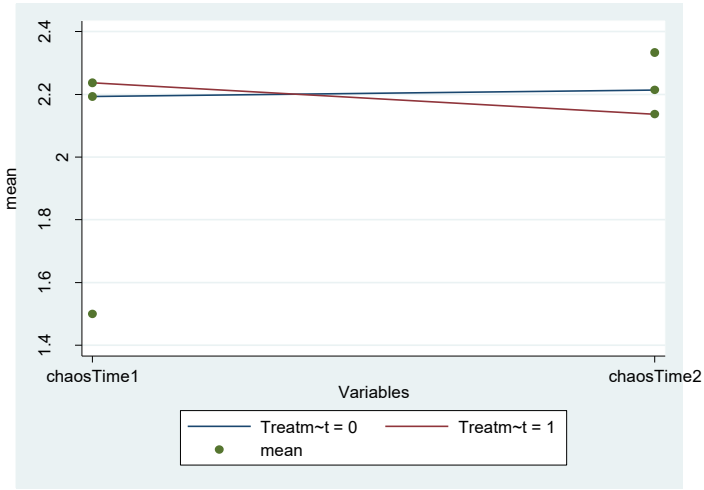


Figure 5.6 Chaos scale showing in-significant variance in the area of chaos in the home. Blue lines represent the comparison group and red line represents the intervention group.

The cognitive stimulation (HOME-SF) measure, which measures the extent to which parents facilitate or encourage academics in the home, also yielded insignificant findings. The mid-test mean rating for the intervention group was 7.11 and comparison group mid-post mean rating was 7.35. The mean mid-test rating for both groups was 7.19. The mean post-test rating for the intervention group was 6.53 and the mean post-test rating for the comparison group was 5.71. The mean post-test rating was 6.23. The ANOVA revealed an insignificant effect of time on HOME-SF and an insignificant interaction between intervention and time (see Figure 5.8).

However, the parenting competence (PSOC) results yielded significant findings. The mid-test mean rating for the intervention group was 5.23 and comparison group mid-post mean rating was 5.06, which were not significantly different. The mean mid-test rating for both groups was 5.17. The mean post-test rating for the intervention group was 5.36 and the mean post-test rating for the comparison group was 4.57, which were significantly different. The mean post-test rating was 5.05. Although, the intervention group's mean ratings increased slightly between the mid-test and post-test, the comparison groups' ratings decreased by 1.14. The ANOVA revealed

an insignificant effect of time, $F(1, 102) = 2.53$, $p = .11$, however, a significant interaction of time and intervention, $F(1, 102) = 7.08$, $p < .01$. Please refer to Figure 5.7.

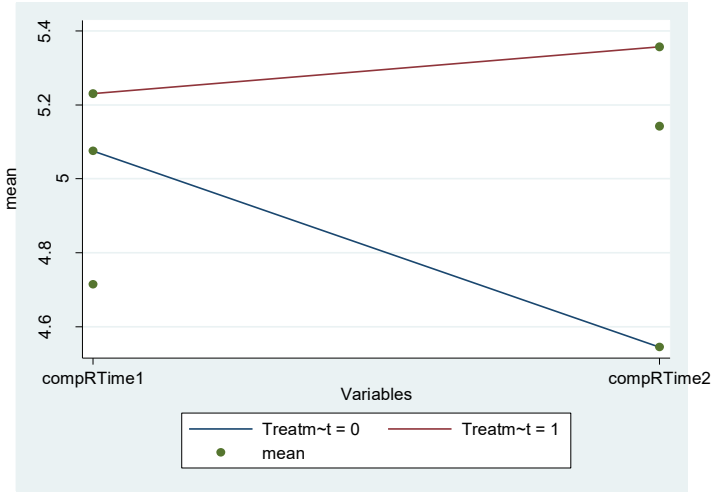


Figure 5.7 Competence scale showing a wide significant variation in parent competence as it relates to parenting. Blue lines represent the comparison group and red line represents the intervention group.

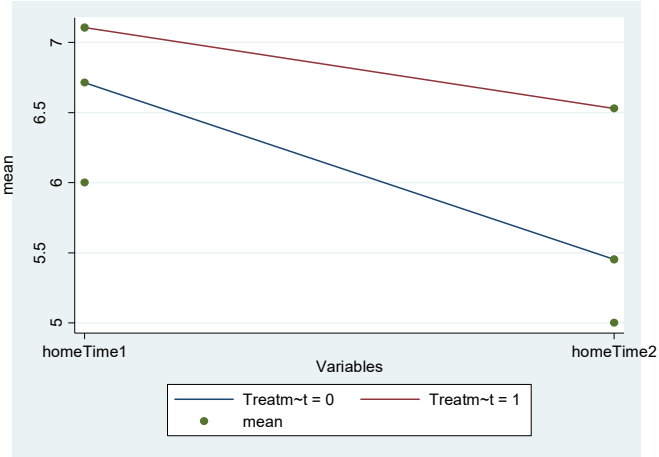


Figure 5.8 Home scale showing an insignificant decline in parent's facilitation of readiness skills at home. Blue lines represent the comparison group and red line represents the intervention group.

Research Question Six:

Will a degree of the fidelity of implementation be associated with parents' efficacy and school readiness practices at the post-intervention?

The number of minutes read for children predicted HOME scores ($\beta = 0.02$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = 0.09$). This finding was true when parents reported that they read more, the end of year HOME scores were higher. Although this was marginally significant, given the sample size, the finding was worthy to report. None of other fidelity measures predicted parent outcomes.

Discussion

Review of Results

Overall, the results of the research suggest that implementation of the Bedtime in a Box, parent intervention, positively influenced the school readiness skills of prekindergarten children measured by ELA within the studied city. Although not all research questions (RQ) yielded significant findings, the range of triangulated indicators such as student ELA data, student

attendance, parent measures, and student perspectives support the notion that parent interventions do influence the school readiness of young children (Dodici, Draper, & Peterson, 2003; Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2011).

Research Question 1 – Intervention was successful in all ELA Domains although the intervention did not affect PPVT nor Head-to-Toes performance. The data revealed that the intervention may have had a profound impact in areas of social-emotional foundations and physical development. All developmental domains (literacy and language, mathematics, social-emotional foundations, and developmental, fine and gross motor) for the intervention group were lower than the comparison group during the BOY and MOY assessment administration periods. However, gaps in student performance were reduced at each benchmarking period. The intervention group surpassed the comparison group in the areas of social foundations and physical development at the EOY benchmark. These student measures suggest that parent interventions that involve the establishment of ritual and routine can help with children's adjustment to school (Spagnolia & Fiese, 2007; Fiese, Eckert, & Spagnola, 2005).

Research Question 2 – Given the results, no correlation was established between the fidelity of implementation and student school readiness. This disconnection may be attributed to the notion that the checklist may have been an effective tool to measure fidelity of the intervention. The results could also mean that the parent intervention (BiaB) works for all participants, regardless of the checklist. Another reason could be that the checklist is not the best way to measure fidelity. During the parent check-ins, caregivers reported that once the routine became automated within the home, the checklist was viewed as a burden. They reported that the checklists were valuable in the beginning of the intervention to help establish the routine, but

became burdensome as it slowed down their bedtime routine (Bathory & Tomopoulos, 2017; Sytsma, Kelley, & Wymer, 2001).

Research Question 3 – Oftentimes, the subjects of student research do not report the voice of the students that are being researched. As researchers, it is a responsibility that should be examined when possible (Irwin & Johnson, 2005) as preschool children are able to form their opinions. In the current study, children expressed a range of emotions about their upcoming transition to kindergarten. Their responses were associated with the social-emotional developmental domain. These findings demonstrate the importance of targeted resources to address children's social and emotional needs (Breitenstein et al., 2012; Breitenstein, Shanes, Julion, & Gross, 2015). Although BiaB is a parent intervention, the intervention is designed to positively affect children's school readiness outcomes and overall home experiences. Therefore, are not their perspectives important to explore? We found that children want to "do" BiaB every night and they appreciated various contents of the box.

Research Question 4 – Given the 100% participation at the intervention group parent orientation, parents demonstrated their interest in BiaB and their willingness to participate in the current study. While caregivers offered overall positive epithets about BiaB, parents shared that the number of books (five) was not enough. They grew tired of rereading the same books each night with their children. When families were informed that they would receive a refresher kit with new books, families expressed satisfaction with this information. Located in a book desert (Neuman & Moland, 2016), access to books can be difficult. This may be a reason for parents' patience level with desiring more books.

Researchers also found that completing a daily checklist was not as effective as hypothesized. Caregivers expressed regret for not returning the checklist as requested, but

insisted that their lack of returning the checklist was due to the checklists becoming an unnecessary task to implementing the intervention. Despite not turning in the checklist, the intervention group students steadily made gains on the ELA and ultimately surpassed the comparison group in the social-emotional and physical development domains. These findings support past research that suggests social-emotional (McLoyd, 1990; Puccioni, 2015) support and physical development associated with sleep hygiene (Bathory & Tomopoulos, 2017; Hale, Berger, LeBourgeois, Brooks-Gunn, 2009) are correlated with school readiness.

Research Question 5 – BiaB's influence on parenting practices were also mixed. While measures that examined parents' cognitive stimulation of their children in the home and the level of chaos/organization about their home routines were insignificant, parent confidence was significantly influenced by BiaB. While both the intervention and comparison groups' sense of parenting competence decreased, the decline within the comparison group was quite significant. Some reasons for this sharp decline could be attributed to the growing demands on the parents from the transition from having a non-school aged child versus a school-aged child. Some of those assumptions could be the establishment of new routines, assisting children homework activities, or changes in childcare (DeCarlo-Santiago, Fuller, Lennon, Kataoka, 2016; Puccioni, 2015; Keels, 2009).

Research Question 6 – The most significant finding was that the more (amount of minutes) parents read to their children, the more parents facilitated cognitive stimulation in the home. This finding is supports the bevy of research available that discusses the influence of cognitive stimulation in the home and reading books before school age positively impacts the school readiness of children (Schaub, 2015; Ferretti & Bub, 2017). Upon examining each research question RQ2 and RQ6, the findings suggest that child outcomes and parent outcomes

about fidelity of implementation could be embedded within one section about fidelity. The most significant findings associated with this study are not associated with fidelity.

Limitations

The non-randomized trial is the best option to address this problem of practice due to the limitations of the organization and time constraints. A randomized trial was the most desirable as it is the "golden standard" due to its minimal threats to validity. However, given the resources available and the limited sample size, it was not a feasible option. Another research design that was considered was a case study. For example, if BiaB was distributed widely across my organization, and there were either significant or insignificant changes in a child's school readiness skills, a case study could be conducted to explain the reasons for the discrepancies.

Although, the non-randomized trial was the best option for my problem of practice. There are a series of limitations to consider. A glaring threat to the chosen design in selection bias due to the limited number of students available to participate in the program. I could not randomly assign children to the school nor assign them to an intervention or comparison group. In addition, the response rate for the comparison group was low (50%). This opened the study to the threat of confounding alternative causes of intervention. Although the study was not randomized, the comparison and intervention group shared similar characteristics. Despite the fact that the design was not random, the results statistical associations and trends were highlighted.

A power analysis was completed to determine the smallest sample size required to detect an anticipated level of significance. The analysis reported that a sample of 51 parent-child dyads were necessary in both the intervention and comparison groups for the result are valid. This study had a total 56 participants (36 intervention and 20 comparison). With this small sample size, the significant results should be interpreted with caution due to the fact that the total amount

of participants is similar to the total number of participants suggested by the power analysis. A larger sample size, especially within the comparison group could have led to more solid result that could have been interpreted with greater confidence.

Another limitation associated with the sample is representation. All participants in the study attended a Title One school within the studied city. However, within the studied city, not all schools are Title One schools nor their demographics similar to the intervention and comparison schools. These characteristics of the sample are not sensitive to the requirements of generalizability. Therefore, if this study was replicated in a different city, or even nationally with the same measures, results could vary greatly.

Secondly, a limitation attributed to this design is the presence of multiple confounding variables; including students being taught by different teachers and in different schools, which could affect the student performance on outcome measures. There could also be unobserved individual characteristics of students and parents that I could not account for due during pre-K enrollment. Moreover, maturation is a threat to internal validity because students should naturally acquire more skills over time (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Students may improve school readiness scores, by simply being enrolled in pre-K and the natural experiential learning that occurs in the classroom. Another threat to this design is regression to the mean. The target population for this study is one that has scored low on school readiness tests for consecutive years (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002).

The unreliability of intervention implementation is a significant threat to this study (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). BiaB is designed to be implemented 5-7 nights per week. If a parent does not implement the program to fidelity, effects of BiaB could be underestimated when compared to parents who implement with fidelity. Given these internal threats to validity,

one way to increase the internal validity of this study is to measure the fidelity of the implementation, regularly check-in with parents via phone calls or in-person check-ins and account for the level of fidelity in the analyses. However, the response rate for the fidelity checklist was low. Two research questions yielded rather insignificant findings which suggests the checklist could be an invalid measure to assess BiaB's effectiveness. The only significant finding regarding the amount of minutes read and its relationship to cognitive stimulation in the home was only slightly significant. The sole reason for including the result were due to the small sample size. Ultimately, the findings associated with RQ2 and RQ6 should be interpreted with caution as the fidelity of implementation tool (checklist) may not have been the best tool to measure the BiaB's daily routine.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

The program evaluation (current study) yielded encouraging findings for BiaB, a parent intervention which promotes rituals and routines in the home that in turn promote school readiness. There are many studies that promote book reading in the home and in-person parent interventions that promote positive discipline in the home that impact school readiness skills for children. However, the presence of research that typifies at-home parent interventions that directly or indirectly is relatively absent. The novelty of this at-home box parent intervention are promising as student data and parent data justify its use. Additionally, more disciplines are utilizing the box method. For example, in Scotland, after a pilot, in January 2017, all mothers who give birth will receive a box filled with new parent essential items and the box can be used for the baby's first crib (Ford, 2017). Within the US's fast-paced society, education professionals are too examining innovative methods, without taxing the time of parents to engage them in the education process of their young children like the box method. In order to advance the use of

products such as BiaB, more research is needed in the area of exploring valid fidelity measures to ensure that parents are implementing interventions as designed. A possible solution could be to modify the existing checklist to include or remove variables to determine which variables to best capture parents' implementation of the intervention. Now that we've discovered that BiaB is associated with positively influencing school readiness skills for children according to ELA and Head Toes assessments, the data did not reveal significant growth with parent perception and parent confidence for school readiness. Parent confidence as it relates to school readiness. If parents are regarded as children's first and best teachers (Ramey & Ramey, 1998), then parents should feel confident in their ability to help their children become school ready. BiaB existence has helped to bridge the gap between home and school in a manner that is measureable and quantifiable, but has had no significant impact on parent perceptions. More research is needed in the area of parents' perceptions of school readiness for practitioners and education entrepreneurs to design programs that increase parent confidence to promote school readiness activities within the home.

Moreover, district and policymakers should create policy as it relates to early childhood education and parent involvement. These stakeholders should consider using programs such as BiaB to promote school readiness in urban communities and effectively engage parents in a manner that is not taxing on their time, but is meaningful and quantifiable in terms of their parenting competence based on their contributions to their child's overall development and their children's performance on multiple assessments. Lastly, adding more books to the box or partnering the local library book mobile could help quell parents' concern about the availability of books. Ultimately, local and stated education agencies should financially invest in programs

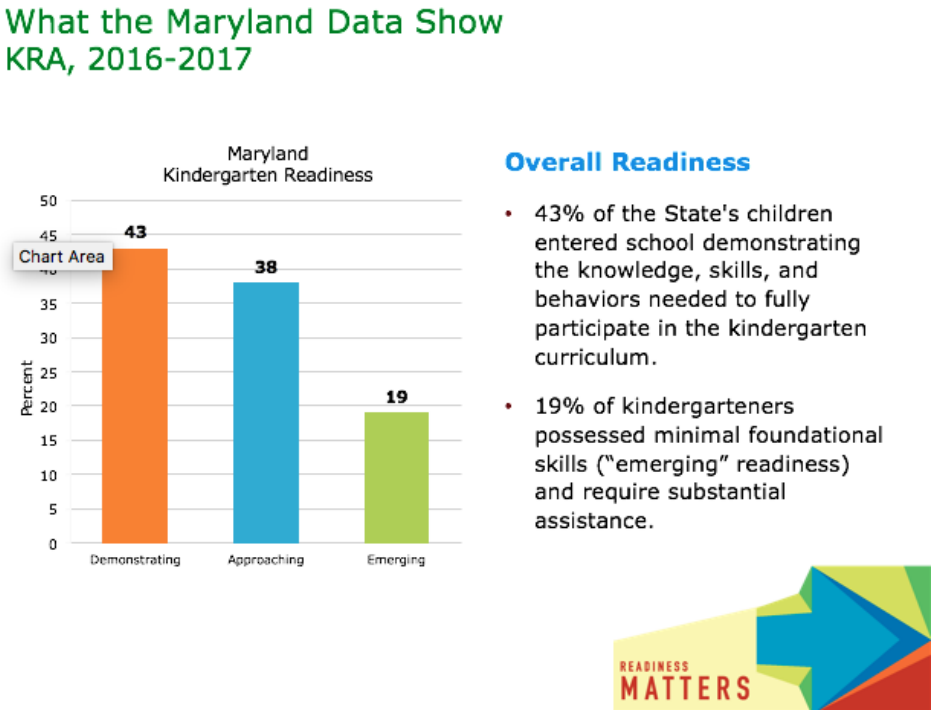
or interventions that support parents to take an active role in the educational careers of their children from birth.

Conclusion

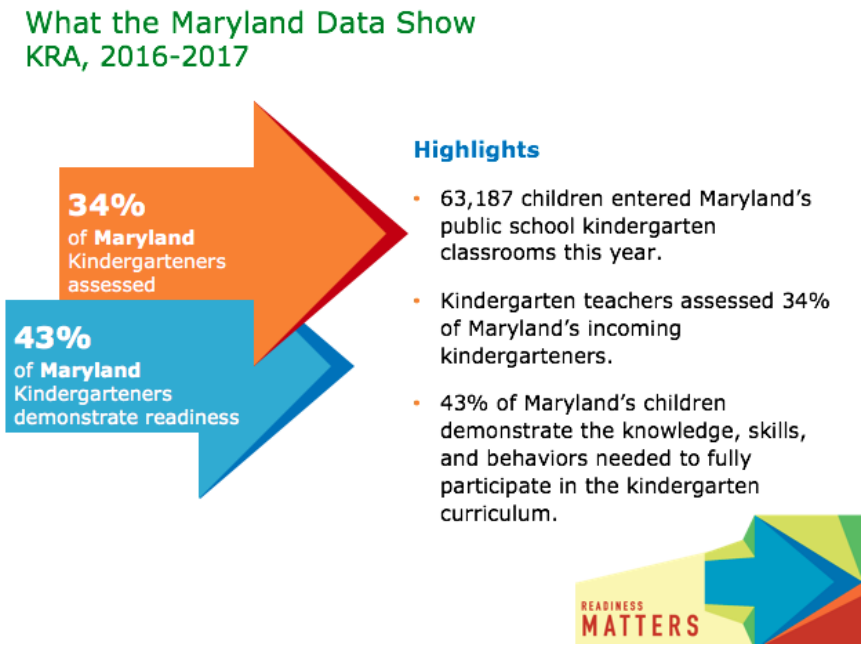
This research is relevant to the field of early childhood education because it highlights the importance of the parent-child relationship as it relates to school readiness skills. Although the current body of research speaks to in-person parent interventions to support school readiness, this research identifies that gap that exists around at-home parent interventions. Not only does the study's results reveal that the intervention's findings from various student and parent measures showcase BiaB as a worthy intervention to address school readiness. If parents are truly children's first and best teachers, then programs like Bedtime in a Box are great resources to empower parents to own that role. Local school districts and early learning professionals should explore interventions such as BiaB to help prepare young learners for the expectations of school.

Appendix A

State KRA Scores



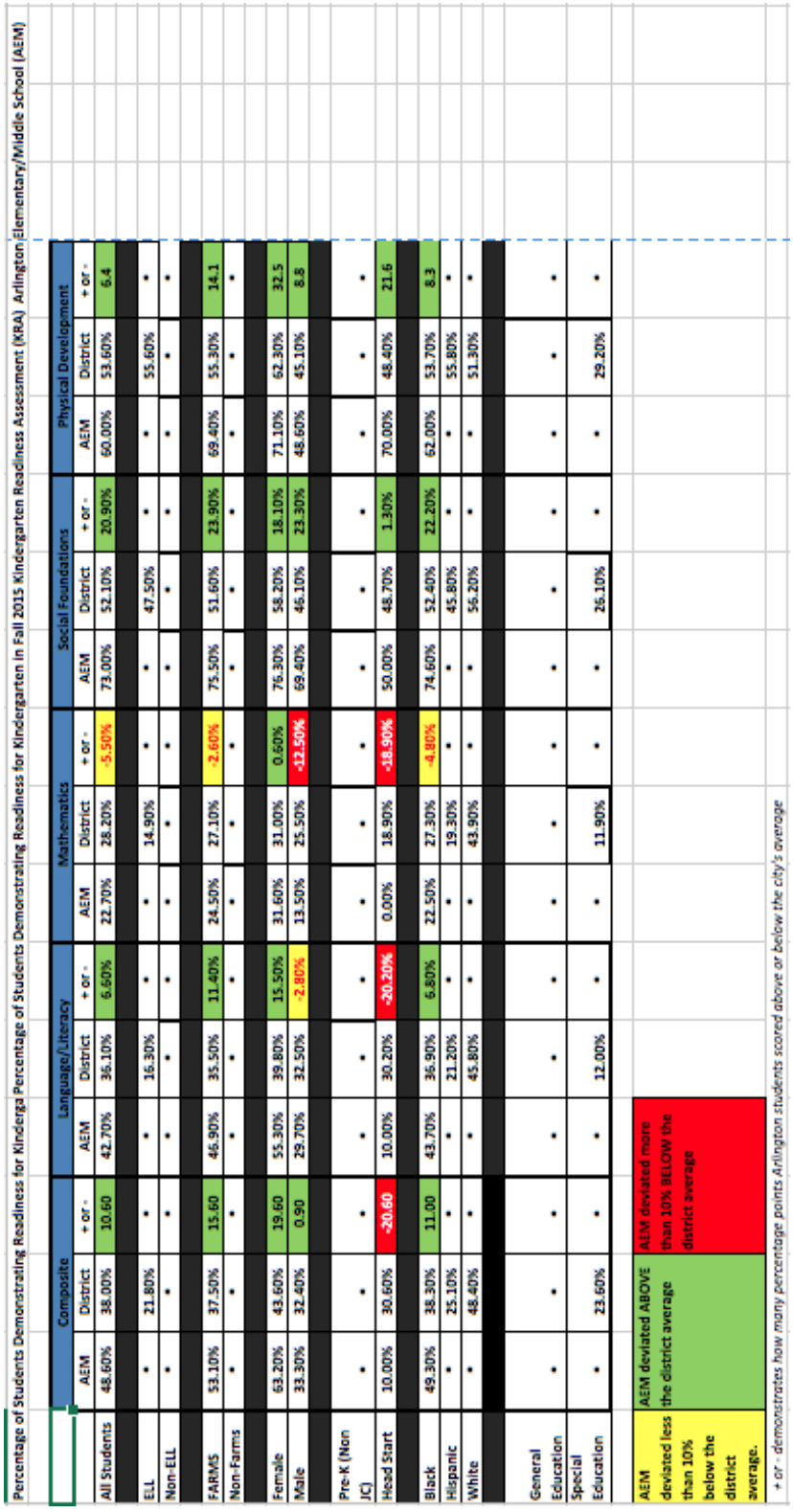
(Walker & Wagner, 2017)



(Walker & Wagner, 2017)

Appendix B

Fall 2015 KRA data



Percentage of Students Demonstrating Readiness for Kinderga Percentage of Students Demonstrating Readiness for Kindergarten in Fall 2015 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) Arlington Elementary/Middle School (AEM)

	Composite			Language/Literacy			Mathematics			Social Foundations			Physical Development		
	AEM	District	+ or -	AEM	District	+ or -	AEM	District	+ or -	AEM	District	+ or -	AEM	District	+ or -
All Students	48.60%	38.00%	10.60	42.70%	36.10%	6.60%	22.70%	28.20%	-5.50%	73.00%	52.10%	20.90%	60.00%	53.60%	6.4
ELL	*	21.80%	*	*	16.30%	*	*	14.90%	*	*	47.50%	*	*	55.60%	*
Non-ELL	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
FARMS	53.10%	37.50%	15.60	46.90%	35.50%	11.40%	24.50%	27.10%	-2.60%	75.50%	51.60%	23.90%	69.40%	55.30%	14.1
Non-Farms	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Female	63.20%	43.60%	19.60	55.30%	39.80%	15.50%	31.60%	31.00%	0.60%	76.30%	58.20%	18.10%	71.10%	62.30%	32.5
Male	33.30%	32.40%	0.90	29.70%	32.50%	-2.80%	13.50%	25.50%	-12.50%	69.40%	46.10%	23.30%	48.60%	45.10%	8.8
Pre-K (Non JC)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Head Start	10.00%	30.60%	-20.60	10.00%	30.20%	-20.20%	0.00%	18.90%	-18.90%	50.00%	48.70%	1.30%	70.00%	48.40%	21.6
Black	49.30%	38.30%	11.00	43.70%	36.90%	6.80%	22.50%	27.30%	-4.80%	74.60%	52.40%	22.20%	62.00%	53.70%	8.3
Hispanic	*	25.10%	*	*	21.20%	*	*	19.30%	*	*	45.80%	*	*	55.80%	*
White	*	48.40%	*	*	45.80%	*	*	43.90%	*	*	56.20%	*	*	51.30%	*
General Education	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Special Education	*	23.60%	*	*	12.00%	*	*	11.90%	*	*	26.10%	*	*	29.20%	*

AEM deviated less than 10% below the district average.

AEM deviated ABOVE the district average

AEM deviated more than 10% BELOW the district average

+ or - demonstrates how many percentage points Arlington students scored above or below the city's average

Appendix C

Fall 2016 KRA data

Percentage of Students Demonstrating Readiness for Kindergarten in Fall 2016 using Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) at Arlington Elementary/Middle School (AEM)

	Composite			Language/Literacy			Mathematics			Social Foundations			Physical Development		
	AEM	District	+ or -	AEM	District	+ or -	AEM	District	+ or -	AEM	District	+ or -	AEM	District	+ or -
All Students	46.30%	48.20%	-1.90	53.40%	47.50%	+5.9	72.40%	45.90%	+ 26.5	10.50%	49.10%	-38.6	32.70%	54.00%	- 21.3
ELL	*	21.90%	n/a	*	13.80%	*	*	28.70%	*	*	29.70%	*	*	39.00%	*
Non-ELL	49.00%	50.00%	- 1.0	57.70%	49.90%	+ 7.8	73.10%	47.20%	+ 25.9	11.80%	50.40%	-38.6	34.00%	55.00%	- 21.0
FARMS	46.90%	45.60%	+4.3	50.90%	44.00%	+6.9	73.60%	43.00%	+ 30.6	11.50%	47.50%	- 36.0	32.00%	52.80%	- 20.8
Non-Farms	*	66.20%	*	*	66.00%	*	*	66.60%	*	*	59.70%	*	*	62.10%	*
Female	50.00%	55.70%	- 5.70	58.10%	52.00%	+ 6.1	77.40%	49.10%	+ 14.2	20.00%	57.10%	-14.2	31.00%	63.50%	- 32.5
Male	42.30%	40.90%	+1.4	48.10%	43.00%	+ 5.1	66.70%	42.80%	+ 28.3	0.00%	41.20%	- 37.10	34.60%	44.70%	- 10.1
Pre-K (Non JC)	50.00%	57.70%	- 7.70	62.50%	56.70%	+ 5.8	79.20%	55.00%	+ 24.2	20.80%	55.50%	- 34.7	33.30%	62.30%	-29.0
Family Child Care	52.20%	37.40%	+14.8	50.00%	34.80%	+ 15.2	61.50%	35.10%	+ 26.4	0.00%	35.30%	- 35.3	39.10%	41.60%	- 2.5
Black	50.00%	48.60%	+1.4	58.80%	49.00%	+ 9.8	74.50%	44.60%	+29.9	12.00%	49.40%	-37.4	34.70%	55.10%	20.4
Hispanic	*	34.90%	*	*	27.00%	*	*	39.60%	*	*	40.80%	*	*	46.70%	*
White	*	58.70%	*	*	56.20%	*	*	63.90%	*	*	54.09%	*	*	52.60%	*
General Education	48.80%	50.20%	- 1.4	57.40%	49.40%	- 10.3	76.60%	47.60%	+ 29.0	10.90%	50.90%	- 40.0	31.80%	56.00%	-24.2
Special Education	36.40%	23.60%	+12.8	36.40%	23.70%	+ 6.3	54.50%	25.50%	+ 29.0	9.10%	26.10%	- 17.0	36.40%	29.20%	+ 7.2

AEM deviated less than 10% below the district average.

AEM deviated ABOVE the district average

AEM deviated more than 10% BELOW the district average

+ or - demonstrates how many percentage points JR students scored above or below the city's average

Appendix D

Baltimore City District Census Administration

The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) Administering the KRA

In 2016, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation stipulating that local school systems could choose to administer the KRA in one of the following ways:

- **Census Administration.** Each kindergarten teacher administers the KRA to all incoming kindergarteners (100% assessed).
- **Sample Administration.** Each kindergarten teacher administers the KRA to an assigned random sample of students in his/her classroom. MSDE determines the minimum sample size based on the jurisdictional kindergarten enrollment figures.

Regardless of administration method, the KRA can be reported with confidence and accuracy; the findings are statistically comparable to the student population.

READINESS MATTERS

(Walker & Wagner, 2017)

The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) Administering the KRA in 2016

Jurisdiction	Type	Minimum Sample Size
Maryland	**Sample**	**34.0%**
Allegany	Census	100%
Anne Arundel	Sample	20%
Baltimore City	Census	100%
Baltimore County	Sample	20%
Calvert	Sample	25%
Caroline	Census	100%
Carroll	Sample	30%
Cecil	Sample	30%
Charles	Sample	25%
Dorchester	Census	100%
Frederick	Sample	30%
Garrett	Census	100%
Harford	Sample	30%
Howard	Sample	30%
Kent	Census	100%
Montgomery	Sample	10%
Prince George's	Sample	10%
Queen Anne's	Sample	30%
St. Mary's	Sample	30%
Somerset	Census	100%
Talbot	Sample	30%
Washington	Sample	30%
Wicomico	Census	100%
Worcester	Sample	25%

KRA Administration Details in 2016

- **Census:** 8 jurisdictions
- **Sample:** 16 jurisdictions (6 included some census schools)

For jurisdictions using a sample administration method, MSDE:

- Determined minimum sample size to ensure confidence and accuracy of results.
- Advised local school systems that each kindergarten teacher will administer the KRA to an assigned random sample of students in his/her classroom, as randomized samples are statistically accurate. Teachers can also assess additional students.

READINESS MATTERS

(Walker & Wagner, 2017)

Appendix E

The Bainum Foundation (TBF) Poll Summary

Summary of Studied School District Focus Groups

The [redacted] Foundation is planning to make a significant financial investment in new programs for children and their families in Park Heights over the next five years.

In February and March 2016, the foundation hosted three focus groups with [redacted] parents as a follow up to a 100-person Family Forum it held in [redacted] in December 2015. The intent for both the forum and the focus groups was to hear parents' perspectives about what services their young children need, particularly for early childhood and out-of-school-time needs, as well as to understand what supports and services families need in raising their children.

Bainum held the first focus group on Monday, February 22nd at the [redacted] and the second and third focus groups on Friday, March 4th, at the [redacted] and [redacted] respectively. In all, twenty-seven parents participated: 9 at the Zeta Center, 12 at the [redacted] and 6 at [redacted]. A diverse group of parents attended, including young mothers (late teens/early twenties), mothers in their twenties and thirties, moms who have kids with special needs, a grandmother, a guardian, and four fathers.

The focus group discussions covered four topic areas: child care (for infants to 2 year olds), early learning programs (for 3-5 year olds not yet in kindergarten), out-of-school time (for after school and summer camp programs), and supports and services (broadly defined). A fifth discussion at each focus group solicited recommendations about the most important activities or programs for the foundation to invest in for Park Heights.

Overall Themes

The theme most repeated across the focus groups concerned ***safety***, especially regarding child care environments for the youngest children (0-2). A high majority of parents, particularly mothers, did not believe child care options for their young children to be sufficiently safe and, as a result, chose to either stay home with them for a child's first two years or had a grandmother or other family member take care of them.

Many parents also expressed safety concerns more broadly in Park Heights, experiencing too few few places sufficiently safe enough for their kids to play outside (at playgrounds, in the streets, etc.), even with supervision. They emphasized the need to have safe spaces in [redacted] where their "kids could be kids." Especially in the last two focus groups, parents consistently revealed the need for a [redacted] recreation center, open 7 days a week, that could serve as a safe space. Apparently sometime in the past the Rec Center in [redacted] was permanently closed down (a number of parents had participated in numerous activities there when they were kids).

The complementary theme of ***trust*** also emerged in the focus groups, most frequently expressed about the child care providers for their youngest children. Trust, though, was also an overriding concern for a wide range of activities that children might participate in, whether in early learning centers, after school programs, or summer camps. Parents want to make especially sure that when they place their kids in any of these environments that the programs are certified, well-structured for learning, and fun, all being run by competent, qualified staff.

Cost and affordability emerged as the final broad theme for parents. Nearly every parent had a desire to have their kids participate in high quality environments focused on learning, development, and expanding kids' horizons, but found it difficult to afford activities or programs unless they were either heavily subsidized or free.

What follows is a brief summary of comments made by parents in response to each of the topic areas.

Parent Introductions

Parents were first asked to share their name, where they lived, and answer, **"What do you enjoy most about being a parent or caregiver of children under age 8?"**

The most common responses were:

- I love watching them learn new things ever day
- I love to watch them grow
- I enjoy listening to them
- They love me for no reason
- I love being their advocate
- I enjoy their honesty
- They bring out the best in me
- I enjoy teaching them and them teaching me
- They're fun
- They keep me on my toes

Child Care

For child care, we asked parents, **"who took care of your children and where when they were between 0 and 2?"**

- The vast majority of mothers responded that either they took care of them at home or had a close family member take care of them
- A few indicated that their kids attended where they were working at a child care center

We also asked, **"what is most important to you when looking for someone or someplace to take care of your child?"** The most common responses were:

- Trust: Safety was most important, particularly in terms of "who I can trust" – or even, "can I trust?"
- Care by Family Member: Having the kids stay home with them or a family member (grandmother most often), where they knew their kids were safe and were learning
- Safety, Learning, and Patience: A number of parents indicated that if they had to place their kids in a child care center it had be where (1) the staff have patience with the kids, and (2) the kids were safe and learning was nurtured
- Good Curriculum, Environment, and Staff: A few parents indicated that the curriculum, the environment, and the staff were most important
- Special Services: A couple of people indicated that what was most important was a place where special services for their kids were provided, either for learning or medical issues.
- Affordability: Finally, a number of parents indicated that affordability of the care was a key issue

In the final area of focus on this topic, we asked parents to **visualize their ideal setting or situation for child care and then articulate what changes they would want to see made** to their current child care setting and situation to make it more ideal for your child. The most repeated comments were:

- Feels Like Home: "Someplace we can trust – where we know they're learning and being loved and nurtured; someplace that feels like "home"
- Well-Structured: A place that has well-structured and appropriate education for the kids
- Quality Staff: Place where staff love what they do and are well trained and well-qualified
- Trustworthy Teachers: A place where teachers that are patient, tolerant and trustworthy
- Engaging Activities: A place that engages the children in fun and entertaining activities too
- Certified Center: A place that is certified for child care
- Preparing the Kids: Someplace that is getting children ready for Pre-K, Head Start
- Fathers as Role Models: A place where fathers can be active and be seen as role models
- Affordability: Someplace affordable

Early Learning Programs for 3-4 Year Olds

For the early learning topic, we asked, "**What has been your experience with these programs – or what have you heard about the experience of others with these programs?"** The most common responses were:

- Significant Learning: The kids learn a lot there
- Good Socialization: The children are getting socialized well in these programs
- Effective Preparation: The kids are getting prepared well for Kindergarten
- Results: These programs make a big difference
- Special Needs Challenges: It's particularly tough for parents to find the right place for kids who have special needs
- Locations: Parents also named a number of locations where their children receive this education:
  - [redacted] (numerous)
- Good Experiences: Overall, parents have had good or very good experiences with early learning programs

We also asked, **"How did you find out about these programs?"** The most common responses were:

- Word of Mouth: Through word of mouth
- Government: Through local government agencies
- Well-Known: These programs are generally well-known
- Well-Known II: We see these places regularly in the neighborhood

Out-of-School Time

For out-of-school time, we covered two sub-topics: **after-school programs and summer camps.**

After-School Programs

We first asked about after-school programs, asking parents to **"briefly describe the ideal after school programs and activities for your children."** Frequent responses were:

- New Activities: New activities whether that is tennis, swimming, computer programming, dance, sports, etc.
- Resiliency Strategies: A place where kids can learn about anger management, dealing with trauma, etc.
- Fun and Educational: Someplace that is fun and also provides education
- Specific Places: Places like [redacted] or J[redacted] on [redacted] well run [redacted]
- Former Rec Center: Place like the recreation center [redacted] used to have
- Affordability: Someplace affordable (or free)

The follow up question on after-school programs was **"what would be ideal (or more ideal) for after-school programs and activities for your children?"**

- Dynamic Place: A place that excites kids and a place where they can learn
- A Rec or Community Center: We need more recreation in the neighborhood – a place where they can do activities, do homework, participate in clubs, take field trips, etc.
- Trust: Someplace I can trust

Summer Programs

For summer camps or summer programs, we asked **"What have you done for summer programs for your kids 3-8?"** The most common responses were:

- Specific Activities or Locations
    - Swimming
    - Library
    - [redacted]
- Free Activities: Free kids activities advertised in City Paper
- Well-Run: Place that has well-structured and appropriate education for the kids
- Affordability: Most programs are not affordable

We followed that up with the question, **"what would be ideal (or more ideal) to the current summer programs and activities for your children?** Frequent responses were:

- Affordability: Educational, free, and/or affordable
- Freedom Schools: Replicate Freedom Schools
- Fun and educational
- Diverse Activities: Programs that include field trips, sports, swimming, etc.
- School Camp: Have the local community school offer a camp
- All Summer: Provide enrichment all through the summer

Support for Parents and Young Families

We also asked about the supports and services parents need, first by inquiring about **"What kinds of supports and services do families of young children need in** [redacted] Repeated responses included:

- Housing: Helping with housing and assistance with affordable housing
- Special Needs: Getting proper information and services for kids with special needs
- Support for Young Men: Helping to support young men who are fathers so that young kids get what they need from them
- Support for New Fathers: Creating programs to engage new/young fathers; to mentor them; to support them
- Health: Focusing on health issues – including insurance; mobile clinics
- Support for Trauma: Support to parents and kids in dealing with trauma/grief
- Transportation: Transportation support
- Family Advocate: Providing a family advocate or case worker to help inform parents about and help them navigate to get the support they need

We followed up by asking, **"what is the best way for people to learn about family support issues and services available in the community?"** Common responses were:

- Information from schools
- From child care services
- From the Community School
- At places where moms/families frequent (local stores and offices; etc.)
- Library

Advice to the Bainum Family Foundation

Before we concluded each group, we asked, "**What is the most important way that Bainum Family Foundation should invest in** [redacted] for each of the following:"

(1) Early childhood education; child care and early learning programs – ages 0-4

Common responses were:
- More Programs: Create more available spaces in good programs
- Affordable Programs: Make the good programs free or affordable
- Safe Locations: Put centers in safe areas of the neighborhood
- High Quality Programs: Make sure programs have high quality teachers

(2) Services for families

Common responses were:
- Support Whole Family: Engage the whole family in support – not just the Mom or the child
- Diversify Communications: Communicate more often about programs and services through social media
- Parent-focused Programs: Create programs focused on parents – e.g., parent workshops; job placement; GED; mental health; housing; etc.
- Programs for Young Men: Create programs for young men – e.g., job training; mentoring; father support groups; etc.
- Transportation: Provide assistance with transportation

(3) Out-of-school time programs?

Common responses were:
- Affordability: Provide free or subsidized programs
- Age-Specific: Provide fun activities, segmented by age;
- Whole-Day Programs: Provide summer programs that start early and end late
- Rec Center: Build a new Rec Center
- Community Center: Make Judy Center a real community center
- Diverse and Numerous Activities: Expose the children to many and new activities
- Safety: Create safe environments

Wrap Up

At the end of each group, we asked: **Is there anything else we should know about the topics we discussed today?**

Again the issue of **safety** reemerged – essentially to find a way to provide more "safe havens for kids" so they go outside, play at playgrounds, be safe in school environments, etc.

Our Final Insights

Overlapping Results with the Family Forum

Parent perspectives in the focus groups largely mirrored those of parents at the Family Forum. These similarities include:

- Current, Limited Use of Child Care Centers: Less than 30% of participants at the forum currently use child care
- Affordability, Licensed Centers, and Transportation: The top three important issues for child care were: affordability (25%), accredited/licensed (19%), and location/transportation (17%).
- Trust and a Focus on Child Development: Many of the comments on child care indicated that it is critical for staff to really understand child development and that the focus should be both learning and play, not just play. The issue of trust in centers and staff who provide care also was recurrent.
- Pre-K Options Available in Neighborhood: A fairly high majority believed there was at least one good Pre-K option in Park Heights.
- High Quality Pre-K Programs: Comments again included the need for Pre-K programs to balance learning and fun, to make learning fun, to have a strong curriculum, and to help parents understand the stages of development for children of this age.
- Affordability, Transportation, and Limited Options – Child Care/Pre-K: For both child care and Pre-K, parents were very concerned at the forum about affordability (including the cost of transportation), the distances required to travel to get kids to these centers, and the insufficient number of programs in Park Heights
- Limited Out-of-School Time Programs: For those parents who had an opinion at the forum, nearly 60% believed there were no good after-school options and 56% believed that there were no good summer program options. Only about 10% believed there was more than one good option for each type of program.
- Need for Quality After-School Programs: Comments about after school programs included focusing on both learning and fun, provided by qualified staff
- Affordable, Convenient, Quality Summer Programs: Comments about summer programs included convenience (programs provided all summer long), a balance between academics and fun, and affordability
- Neighborhood/Community/Rec Center: When it came to supports and services, recurring comments included the need for neighborhood centers offering activities for kids (a la a Recreation Center or Community School), providing counseling for kids who are experiencing grief or anger, and support for parents to help their kids at home.

There was also overlap in priorities for investment. Parents at the forum indicated that the top three investment recommendations were, in this order, (1) summer enrichment (66% of the votes), (2) after-school tutoring (54% of votes), and (3) child care centers (52% of votes).

Conclusion

Participants were very forthcoming in the focus groups, providing exceptional insights into what really matters for parents in [redacted] who are raising young children. It was inspiring to hear both their dedication and perseverance in oft-times challenging circumstances and heart-wrenching to hear their occasional stories of frustration, fear, and even hopelessness.

Parents experience significant stress in raising children in [redacted] And, it is clear they are eager, and for some even desperate, to provide their children with what they need to learn, grow, and develop in such a challenging environment.

The participation of men, particularly in the second focus group, stimulated a very different conversation at points than the other two focus groups. It was refreshing to hear from the men, and they clearly spoke with pride about playing a critical role in the upbringing of their children. That conversation instigated a very candid conversation about how many young fathers are absent in the care-taking and raising of children in Park Heights, and how critical the need is to think not just about programs that kids or mothers need, but absent, inactive, or unprepared fathers.

The Friday morning conversation at the [redacted] seemed cathartic to many of the participants. They clearly enjoyed and seemed to need this kind of parent-to-parent interaction. In fact, several of them expressed the lack of opportunity to have these kinds of discussions and the need for a place to have them.

The forum and the focus groups made clear the deep need that families have for high quality child care, Pre-K, after-school, and summer programs in Park Heights, and the challenges they encounter to finding such programs.

While considering the breadth and depth of those needs, the foundation should also remain deeply cognizant of the need for:

- Safe spaces/facilities for the children in the neighborhood
- Some type of "one stop shop" to assist parents, convene groups, and publicize critical information, etc., on all of these issues

Appendix F

Educator Questionnaire and Selected Responses

Early Learning Educator Survey – [redacted] Service Providers

Please create a Confidential Unique ID according to the directions below:

First & Last Letter of First Name	First & Last Letter of Last Name	Year of Birth (4 digits)
____ ____	____ ____	____ ____ ____ ____

1. **Do you serve (directly or indirectly) children ages 0-5 in the Park Heights Community of Baltimore, MD? (demographic)**
   - Yes
   - No
2. **Which term below best describes your current professional role? (demographic)**
   - Administrator /Program Manager
   - Teacher
   - Paraeducator/ Teacher Assistant
   - Related service provider
3. **If a classroom teacher, which grade do you teach? Circle One. (demographic)**
   - Pre-K
   - Kindergarten
   - Head Start
   - Licensed Family Care
   - Licensed Center-Based Child Care
4. **Do you serve children with special needs in your role? (demographic)**
   - Yes
   - No

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

5. **The next question is about children's behaviors in your classroom. In your experience, how many children in your current class have the following problems? Please check the box that best represents children in your classroom. ((Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**

	None	A few	About 1/4 of the class	About 1/2 of the class	More than 1/2 of the class
Lack of academic skills					
Difficulty following directions					
Difficulty working as part of a group					
Problems with social skills, getting along with other children					
Difficulty working independently					
Difficulty communicating/language problems					
Chaotic home environments					

6. **On average, how often do you have a conversation with parents or family members about their child in your class? Circle One. (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
   Less than once a month Once or twice a month Once or twice a week Most days

7. **The next statements are about the relationship you have with children's families in general. Please mark how often each is true. (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Family members and I share information				
We talk about how to deal with problems that might arise				
Family members are supportive of me as a caregiver				
Family members accept the way I care for children				
I feel welcomed by family members				
Family members understand my job and what goes on for me at work				

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

8. **What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Please mark ONLY one) (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
   - o Less that high school, no GED
   - o High School Diploma or GED
   - o Some College, but no degree
   - o Associate of Arts Degree (A.A.)
   - o Bachelor's Degree (B.A./B.S.)
   - o Graduate school, but no degree
   - o Graduate degree (M.A./M.S.)
   - o Graduate or professional degree beyond a master's (Ph.D., M.D., J.D., Ed.D)
9. **Have you completed and child development or early childhood education courses <u>beyond high school</u>? (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
   - o Yes
   - o No
10. **Have you taken any child development or early childhood education courses at a <u>college or university?</u> (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
   - o Yes
   - o No
11. **Do you hold a state-level teaching/administrator license? (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
   - o Yes
   - o No
12. **Do you have a state-level certification/credential for working with young children, other than a teaching certificate? (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
   - o Yes (Please specify) _____
   - o No
13. **How many years have you worked in the field of early childhood education? ((Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
   _____ year(s)

14. **How many years have you worked in this program/center? (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**

_____ year(s)

15. **Are you a lead teacher? Circle One. (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
    - o Yes (If Yes, go to number 11)
    - o No (If No, go to number 12)
16. **How many years have you worked as a lead teacher during your career in the early childhood education field? (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
    _____ year(s)
17. **Have you participated in early learning professional development during the previous school year (including the summer)? Circle one. (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
    - o Yes
    - o No

PROGRAM STRUCTURE QUESTIONS

18. **How is your preschool program structured? (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
    - o Full-time
    - o Part-time
    - o Both
19. **Is your program operated by the public school system? (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
    - o Yes
    - o No
20. **Is your program operated by Head Start? (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**No
21. **Is your program nationally or locally accredited? (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
    - o Yes
    - o No
    - o I don't know
22. **Which of the following *main* curricula are you using during the current school year? (Please mark <u>ALL</u> that apply) (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
    - o No curriculum
    - o Don't Know
    - o Creative Curriculum
    - o Tools of the Mind
    - o High Scope
    - o High Reach
    - o Curiosity Corner
    - o Program-developed curriculum
    - o Curriculum approaches that have their own philosophy (e.g. Reggio Emilia, Montessori)

PERSONAL BELIEFS ABOUT SCHOOL READINESS

23. **Do you believe enrolling in an early learning program before kindergarten is beneficial for ALL children? Circle one. (FJ open ended)**
    - o Yes
    - o No

    Why?_____
24. **What developmental domain do you believe most children need more experience with before they reach your program? (FJ open ended)**
    - o Communication
    - o Social Emotional foundations
    - o Physical Development (fine & gross motor)
    - o Cognitive (reading & math)

    Why?_____
25. **Do you believe parent education classes are an important programmatic offering to your parents? (FJ open ended)**
    - o Yes
    - o No

    Why?_____
26. **Do you believe your school district should incorporate more play during the school day? (FJ open ended)**
    - o Yes
    - o No

    Why?_____

27. **Do you believe your curriculum *focuses on cognitive development* (reading and math) and NOT other areas of development? (FJ open ended)**
    - o Yes
    - o No

    Why?_____

28. **Do you believe your curriculum *focuses on other areas of development* and NOT cognitive development (reading and math)? (FJ open ended)**
    - o Yes
    - o No

    Why?_____

29. **Do you believe preschool education prepares ALL children for kindergarten? (FJ open ended)**
    - o Yes
    - o No

    Why?_____

30. **Does your program offer traditional Pre-K services or Play-Based Preschool services? (FJ-exploratory)**
    - o Traditional
    - o Play-based
    - o Not Sure
    - o Both

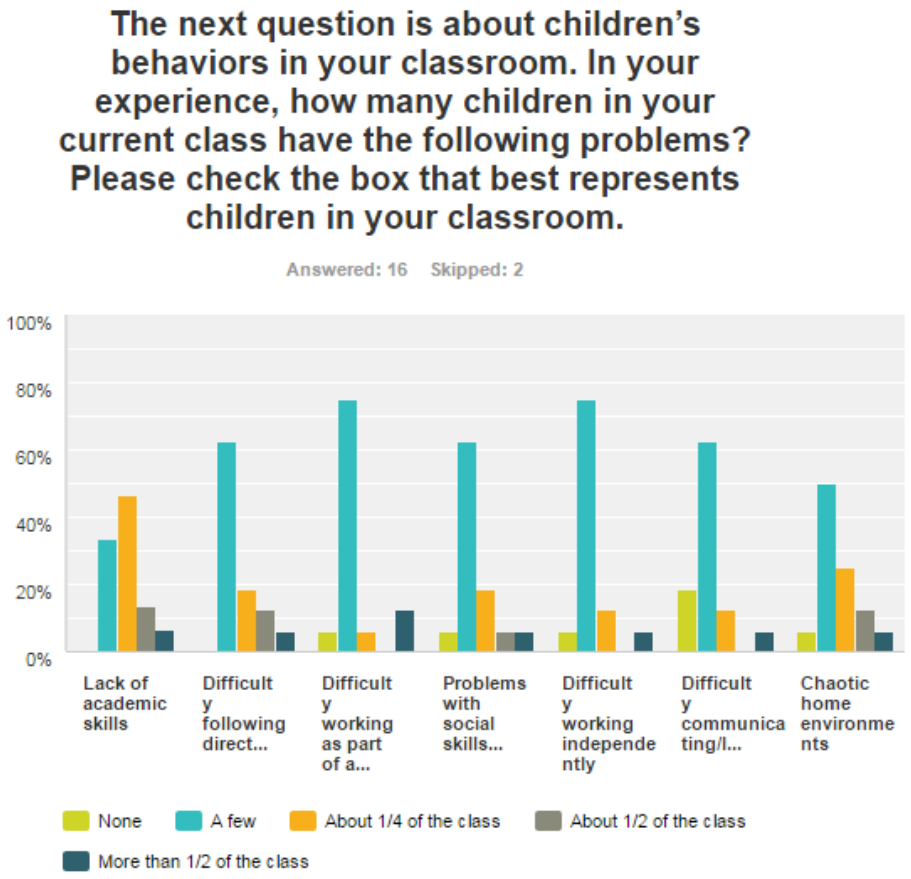
31. **If given a preference, would you prefer to offer Traditional Pre-K or Play-Based Pre-K? (FJ-exploratory)**
    - o Traditional
    - o Play-based
    - o Not Sure

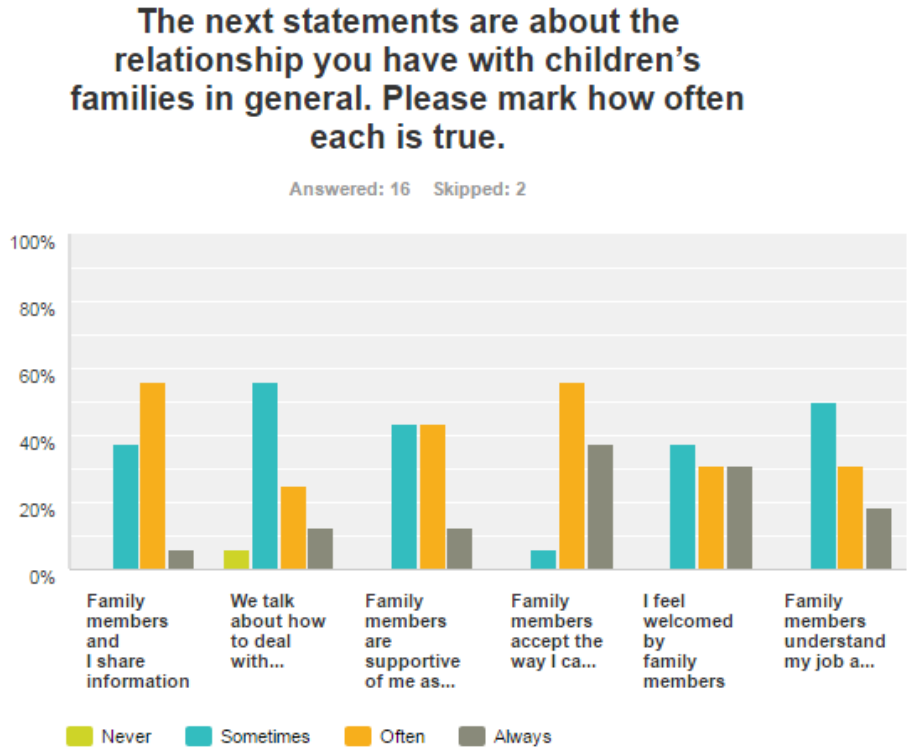
32. **Given your professional experiences, what is the best way to engage/educate families about early learning initiatives? List them below: (FJ open ended)**

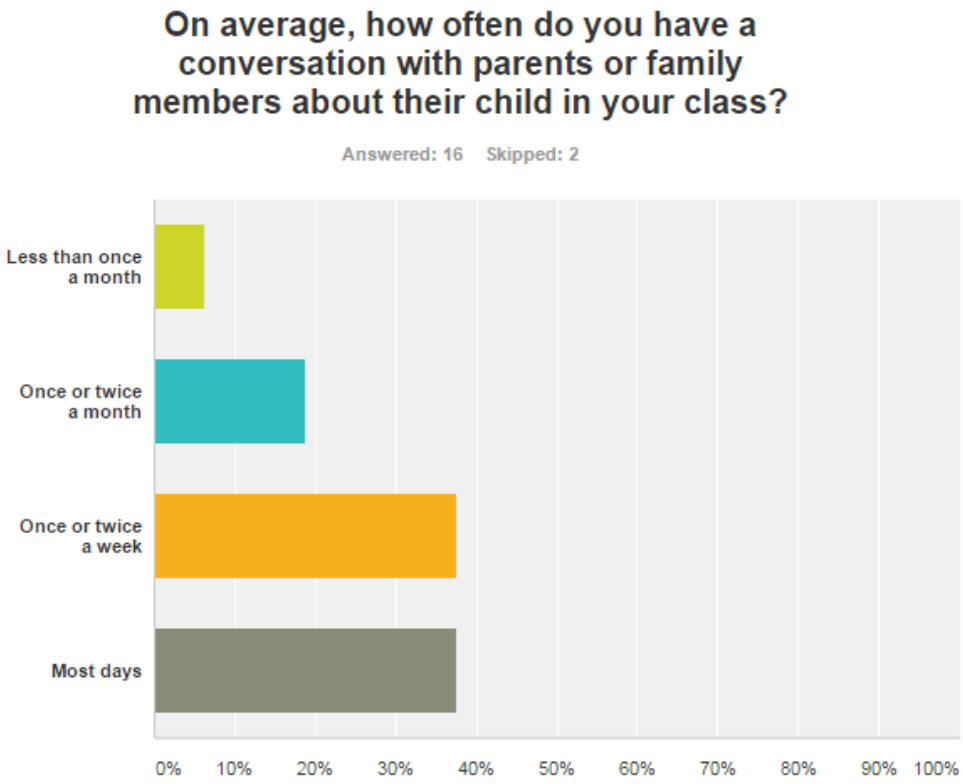
    _____

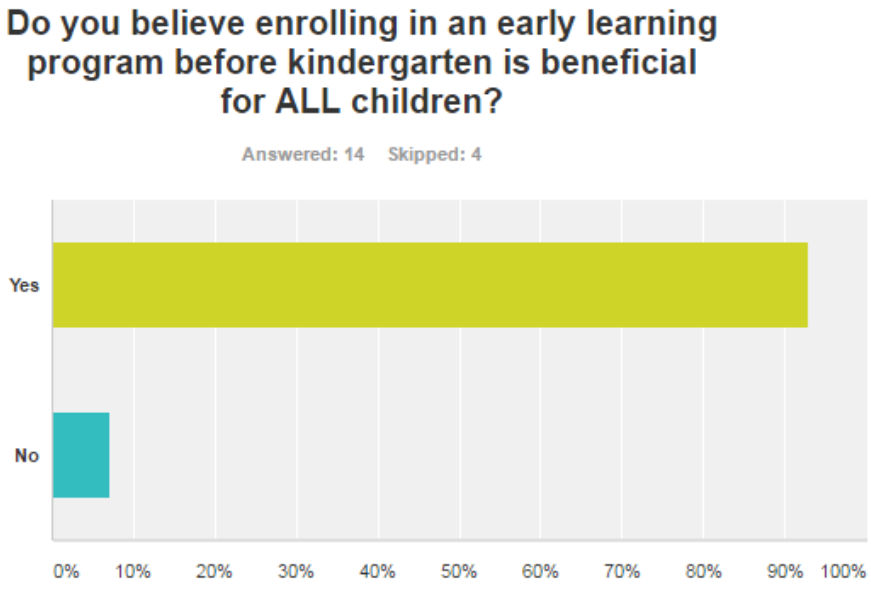
33. **Please list any reactions or additional comments in the box below: (FJ open ended)**

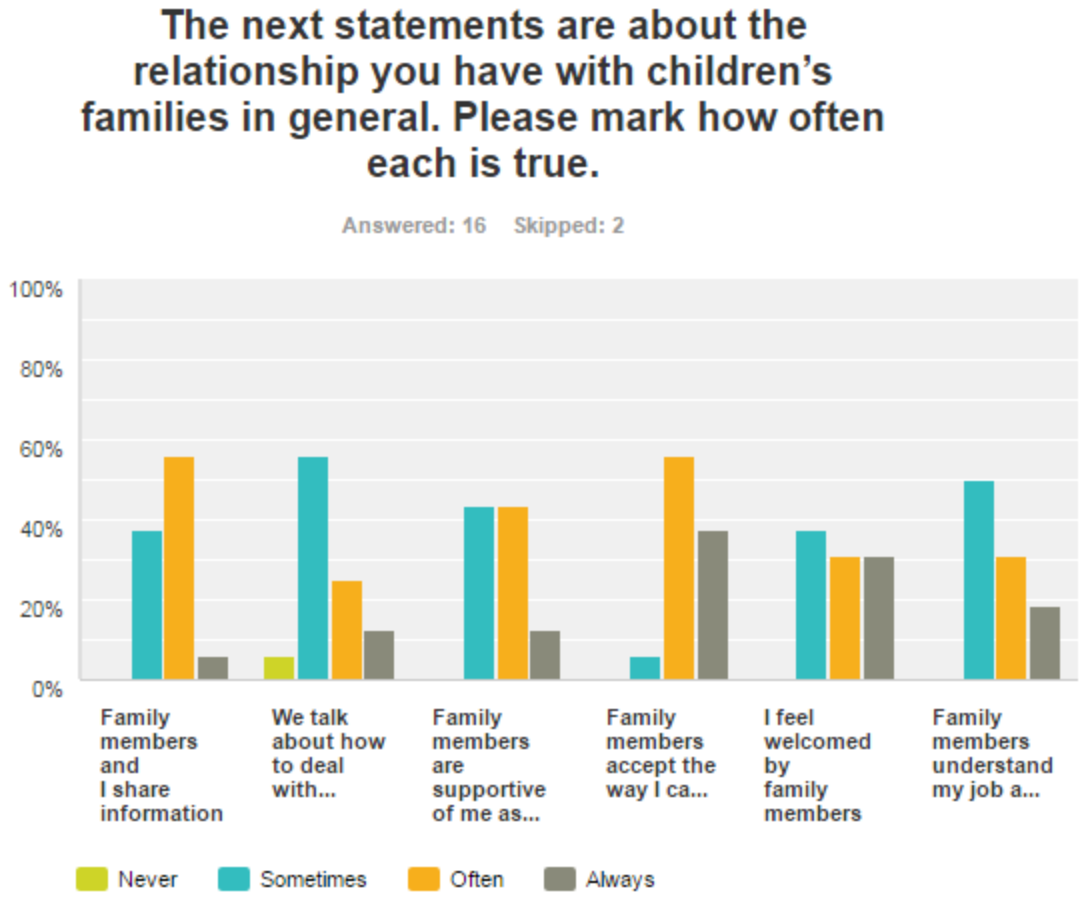
Selected Data Responses

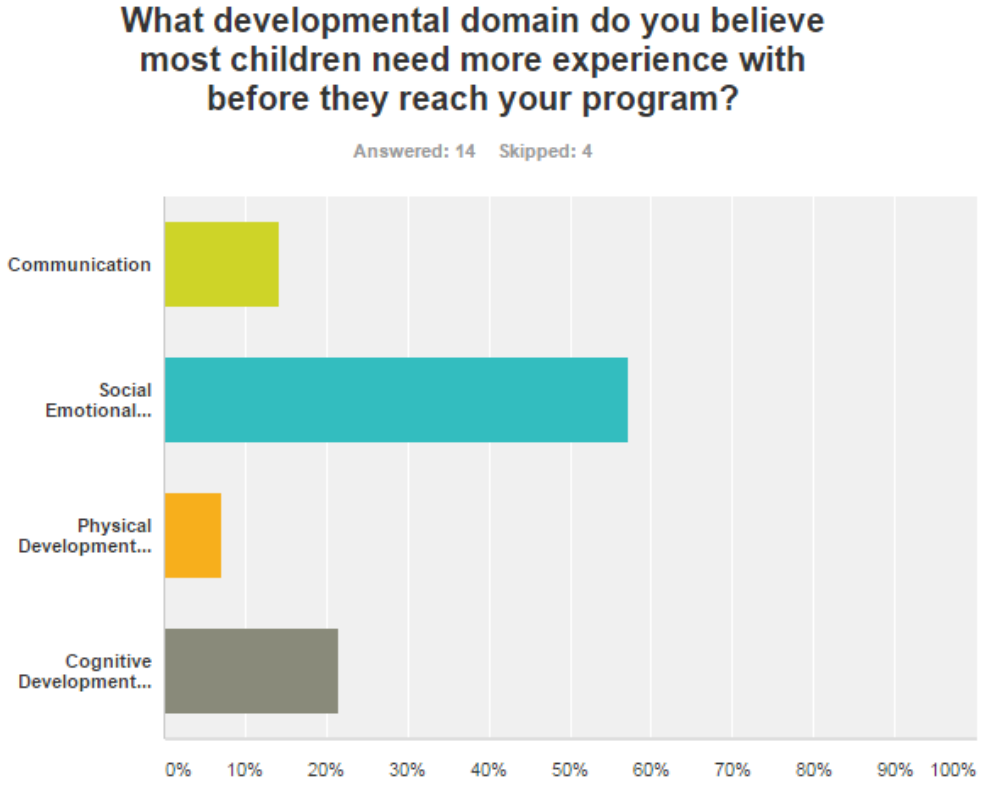


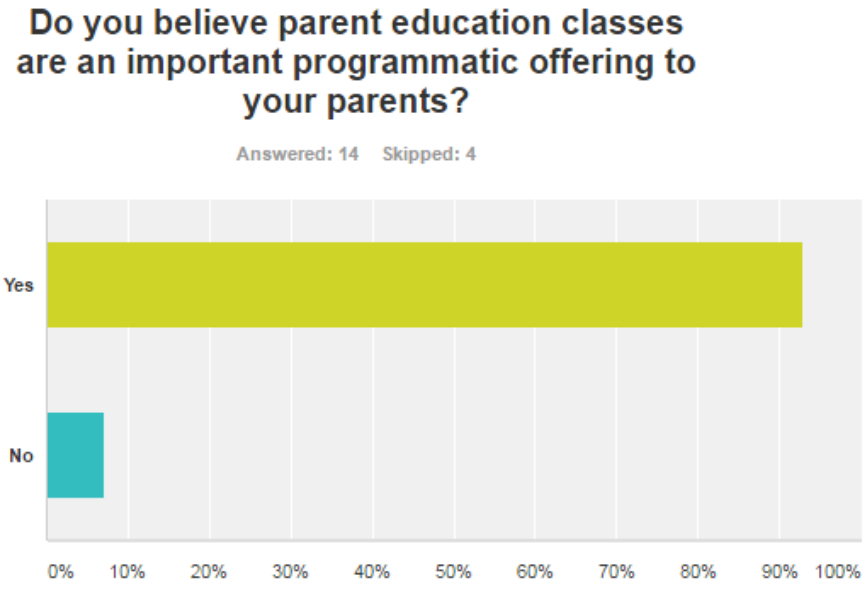


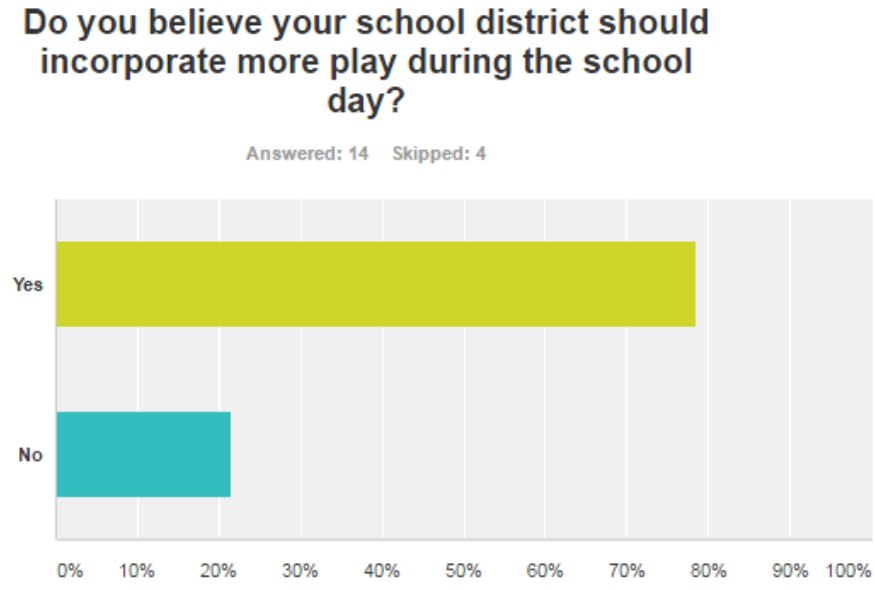

On average, how often do you have a conversation with parents or family members about their child in your class?
Answered: 16 Skipped: 2
Less than once a month
Once or twice a month
Once or twice a week
Most days
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%

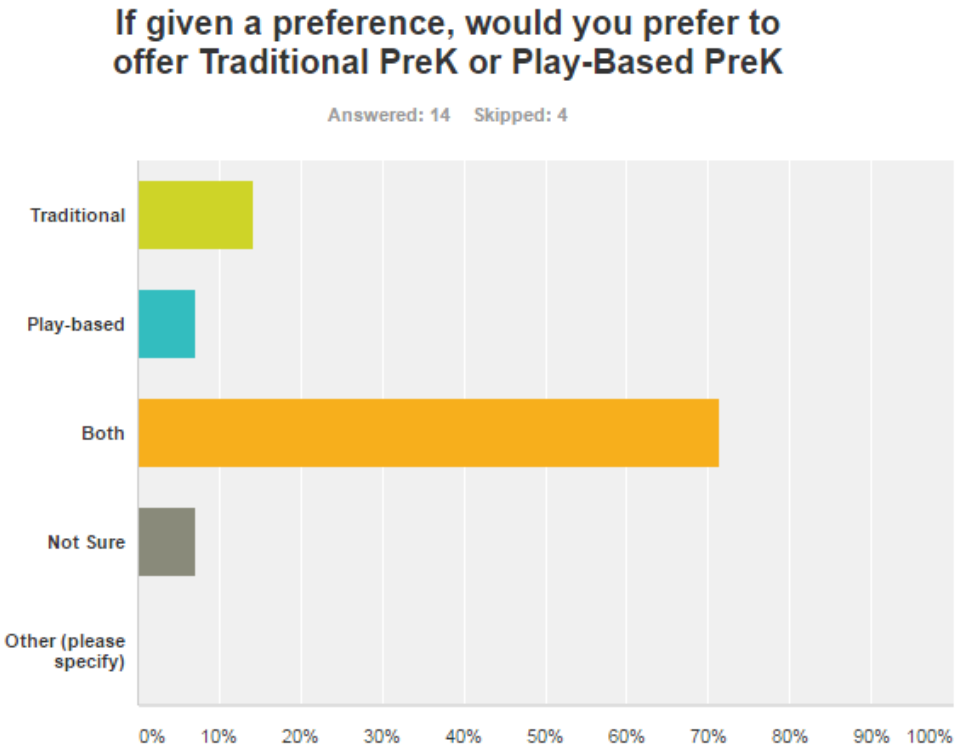

Do you believe enrolling in an early learning program before kindergarten is beneficial for ALL children?
Answered: 14 Skipped: 4
Yes
No
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%


The next statements are about the relationship you have with children's families in general. Please mark how often each is true.
Answered: 16 Skipped: 2
100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
Family members and I share information
We talk about how to deal with...
Family members are supportive of me as...
Family members accept the way I ca...
I feel welcomed by family members
Family members understand my job a...
Never
Sometimes
Often
Always


What developmental domain do you believe most children need more experience with before they reach your program?
Answered: 14 Skipped: 4
Communication
Social Emotional...
Physical Development...
Cognitive Development...
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%


Do you believe parent education classes are an important programmatic offering to your parents?
Answered: 14 Skipped: 4
Yes
No
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%


Do you believe your school district should incorporate more play during the school day?
Answered: 14 Skipped: 4
Yes
No
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%


If given a preference, would you prefer to offer Traditional PreK or Play-Based PreK
Answered: 14 Skipped: 4
Traditional
Play-based
Both
Not Sure
Other (please specify)
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%

Appendix G

Parent Questionnaire and Selected Responses

EARLY LEARNING PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please create a Confidential Unique ID according to the directions below:

First & Last Letter of First Name	First & Last Letter of Last Name	Year of Birth (4 digits)
____ ____	____ ____	____ ____ ____ ____

Directions: Please read each question carefully and answer as honestly as you can – there are no right or wrong answers. Your answers to these questions will help us evaluate and inform the development of early learning services for children in the Park Heights community. Thank you in advance for your time.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. **Select which program your child currently attends. Choose one. (demographic)**
   - o Arlington Pre-K
   - o Arlington Kindergarten
   - o St. Vincent de Paul Head Start
   - o Licensed Family Care
   - o Licensed Daycare Center
   - o No Formal Childcare (care by self, relative, neighbor, friend)
   - o Other Park Heights Pre-K(please specify)_____
   - o Other Park Heights Kindergarten (please specify)_____
2. **How old is your child? (demographic)**
   - o One (1; younger than 12 months)
   - o Two (2; 13 months – 24 months)
   - o Three (3; 24 months – 36 months)
   - o Four (4; 37 months – 48 months)
   - o Five (5; 49 months – 60 months)
   - o Six (6; 61 months – 72 months)
3. **How old are you (parent)? (demographic)**
   - o 15-20
   - o 21-25
   - o 26-30
   - o 31 -35
   - o 36 +
4. **What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Please mark ONLY one) (Survey of Early Childhood Educators, Buettner, Jeon, Hur, & Garcia, 2016)**
   - **a.** Less that high school, no GED
   - **b.** High School Diploma or GED
   - **c.** Some College, but no degree
   - **d.** Associate of Arts Degree (A.A.)
   - **e.** Bachelor's Degree (B.A./B.S.)
   - **f.** Graduate school, but no degree
   - **g.** Graduate degree (M.A./M.S.)
   - **h.** Graduate or professional degree beyond a master's (Ph.D., M.D., J.D., Ed.D)
5. **Does your child have an individualized education plan (IEP) or an individualized family service plan (IFSP) for any challenge that influences his/her ability to do school work in a regular classroom? (Parent Questionnaire, Jeon & Buettner, 2015)**
   - o Yes
   - o No
   - o Don't Know

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL

6. Are there any factors that limit your ability to participate and be involved in your child's school? (choose all that apply) (exploratory, newly developed)

- o My work hours
- o Care of other children/housework were higher priorities
- o Disability
- o Transportation
- o I do not feel welcome at the school
- o Other :_____ (please write)
- o Not Applicable

7. During this school year, have any of your child's teacher(s) or school…(SR-NHES, 2007)

	Yes	No
a. Sent your family notes or E-mails specifically about (CHILD)?		
b. Provided newsletters, memos or notices addressed to all parents?		
c. Called you on the phone?		

8. Since the beginning of this school year, (have/has) (you/any adult in your household)... (SR-NHES, 2007)

	Yes	No
a. Attended a general school meeting, for example, an open house, or a back-to-school night		
b. Attended a meeting of the parent-teacher organization or association		
c. Gone to a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference with (CHILD)'s teacher?		
d. Attended a school or class event, such as a play, dance, sports event, or science fair because of (CHILD)?		
e. Served as a volunteer in (CHILD)'s classroom or elsewhere in the school		
f. Participated in fundraising for the school		
g. Served on a school committee?		
h. Met with a guidance counselor in person?		

FINDING & CHOOSING AN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM OR CHILDCARE

9. Did you enroll your child in Preschool, Pre-K, Head Start, or any other early learning center before kindergarten? (FJ open ended/exploratory)

- o Yes (go to #10a)
- o No (go to #10b)
- o Not Applicable

10. **Please explain your response for question 9.**
    a. **If yes, why?**
        - Academic skills
        - Social skills
        - Child care
        - Other/explain_____
    b. **In no, why?**
        - Academic skills
        - Social skills
        - Child care
        - Other/explain_____
11. **Have you and your child participating in a home visiting program?**
    - Yes (go to #11a)
    - No
12. **Which home visiting program have you participated in?**
    - HIPPY
    - Nurse Family Partnership
    - Baltimore Healthy Start
    - DRU/Mondawmin
    - The Family Tree
    - Other: _____(Please write)
13. **What is the main reason your household wanted a care program for this child in the past year? Mark ONE only. (The National Household Education Survey, 2012)**
    - To provide care when a parent was at work or school
    - To prepare child for school
    - To provide cultural or language learning
    - To make time for running errands or relaxing
    - Some other reason
    - Did not have care in the past year
14. **Do you feel there are good choices for child care or early childhood programs where you live? (The National Household Education Survey, 2012)**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don't Know
15. **How important was each of these reasons when you chose the *child care arrangement* or *program* where this child spends the most time? (The National Household Education Survey, 2012)**
    a. **The location of the arrangement?**
        i. Not at all important
        ii. A little important
        iii. Somewhat important
        iv. Very important
    b. **The cost of the arrangement?**
        i. Not at all important
        ii. A little important
        iii. Somewhat important
        iv. Very important
    c. **The reliability of the arrangement?**
        i. Not at all important
        ii. A little important
        iii. Somewhat important
        iv. Very important

    d. **The learning activities at the arrangement?**
        i. Not at all important
        ii. A little important
        iii. Somewhat important
        iv. Very important
    e. **The child spending time with other kids his/her age?**
        i. Not at all important
        ii. A little important
        iii. Somewhat important
        iv. Very important

f. The times during the day that this caregiver is able to provide care?
   i. Not at all important
   ii. A little important
   iii. Somewhat important
   iv. Very important

g. The number of other children in the child's care group?
   i. Not at all important
   ii. A little important
   iii. Somewhat important
   iv. Very important

Family Activities

16. In the past week, how many times has anyone in your family done the following things with this child? (The National Household Education Survey, 2012)

a. Sang songs with your child?
   i. Not at all
   ii. 1 or 2 times
   iii. 3 or more times

b. Worked on arts and crafts with your child?
   i. Not at all
   ii. 1 or 2 times
   iii. 3 or more times

c. Told your child a story? (Do not include reading to this child.)
   i. Not at all
   ii. 1 or 2 times
   iii. 3 or more times

17. About how many children's books does your child have? Circle one: (Jeon & Buettner, 2015))
- 10 or more books
- 3 to 9 books
- 1 to 2 books
- None

18. About how often do you read stories to your child? Circle One: (Jeon & Buettner, 2015)
- Never
- Once a week
- Several times a year
- At least 3 times a week
- Several times a month
- Everyday

19. Are there family rules for (CHILD) about doing homework? (SR-NHES, 2007)
- Yes
- No
- Not Applicable

20. (Do/Does) (you/any adult in your household) check to see that (his/her) homework is done? (SR-NHES, 2007)
- Yes
- No
- Not Applicable

PARENT BELIEFS

21. How important do you think it is for (you/any adult in your household) to … (SR-NHES, 2007)

	Essential	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
a. Teach your child the alphabet?				
b. Teach your child about sharing?				
c. Teach your child to read?				
d. Teach your child numbers?				
e. Show your child how to hold a pencil?				
f. Discipline your child when (he/she) is misbehaving?				

22. Would you say that you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied . . . (SR-NHES, 2007)

	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED
a. With the school (CHILD) attends this year?				
b. With the teachers (CHILD) has this year?				
c. With the academic standards of the school?				
d. With the order and discipline at the school?				
e. With the way that school staff interacts with parents?				

23. Is participating in a preschool/early learning program important to prepare your child for kindergarten? (FJ open exploratory)

a. Essential
b. Very Important
c. Somewhat Important
d. Not Important

24. How important do you believe early childhood education is to your child's development? (FJ open exploratory)

- Essential
- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not Important

25. Do you believe "play" is important in a preschool program? (FJ no validation exploratory)

- Yes
- No
- No preference

26. If given a choice, would you enroll your child in traditional Pre-K class or a play-based Pre-K class? Choose one. (FJ no validation exploratory)

- Traditional Pre-K
- play-based Pre-K
- No preference

27. What resources in your community do parents need to help prepare their children to kindergarten? Please list them below: (FJ open ended)

_____

28. Are there any resources in the community that you currently use to help prepare children for kindergarten? Please list them below: (FJ open ended)

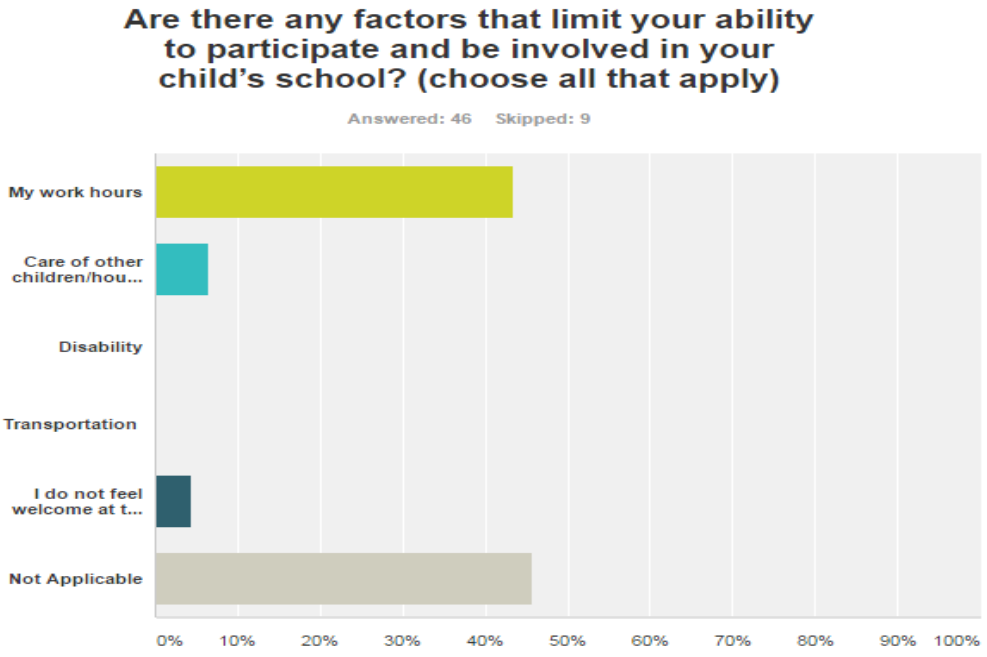
---

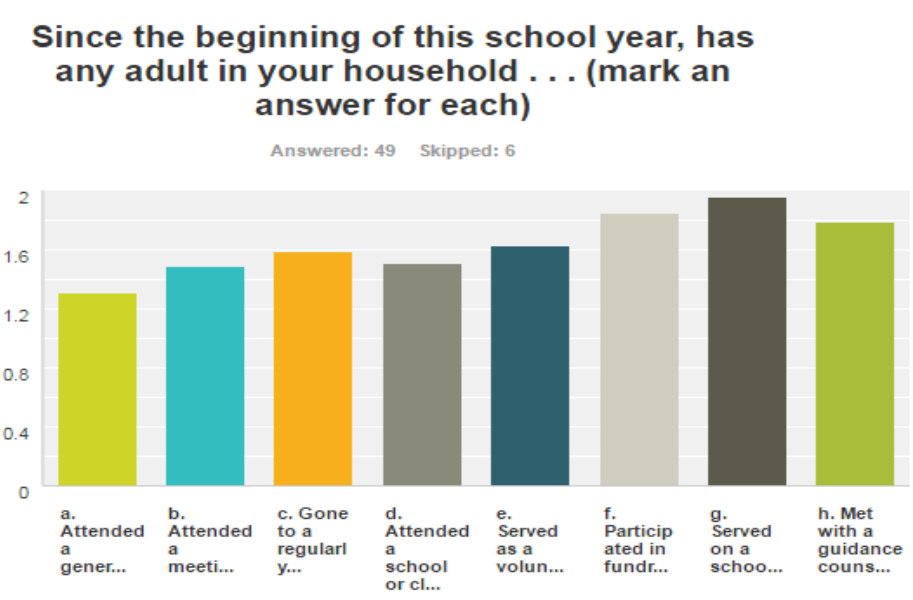
29. What is your definition of *HIGH QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION*? Please enter your definition below: (FJ open ended)

_____

30. Please list any reactions or comments in the box below: (FJ open ended)

Selected Responses

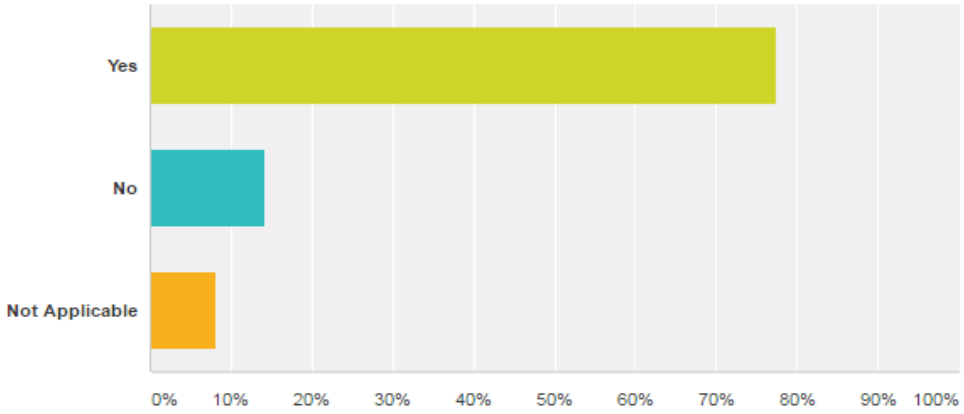




	Yes	No	Total	Weighted Average
a. Attended a general school meeting, for example, an open house, or a back-to-school night	69.39% 34	30.61% 15	49	1.31

Did you enroll your child in Preschool, PreK, Head Start, or any other early learning center before kindergarten?

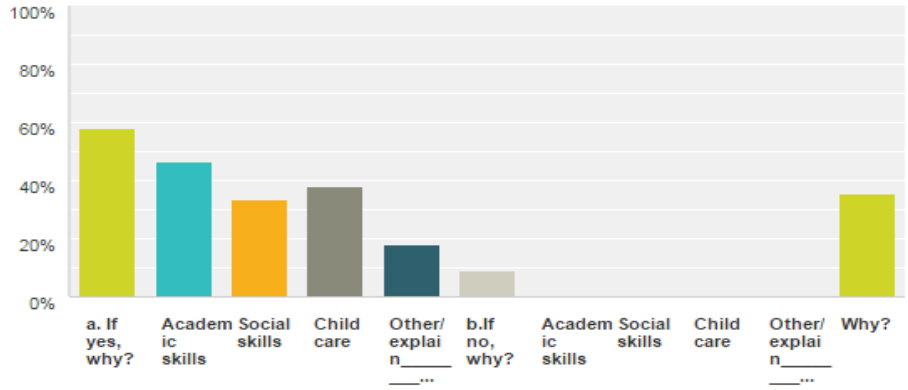
Answered: 49 Skipped: 6



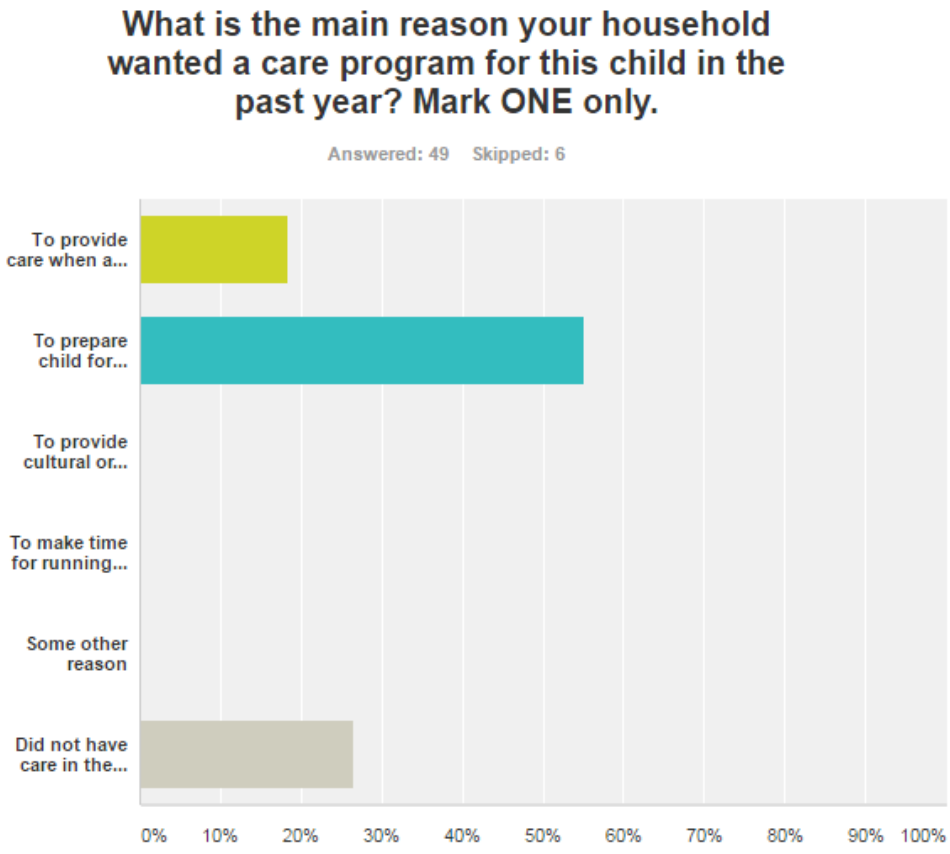
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	77.55%	38
No	14.29%	7
Not Applicable	8.16%	4
Total		49

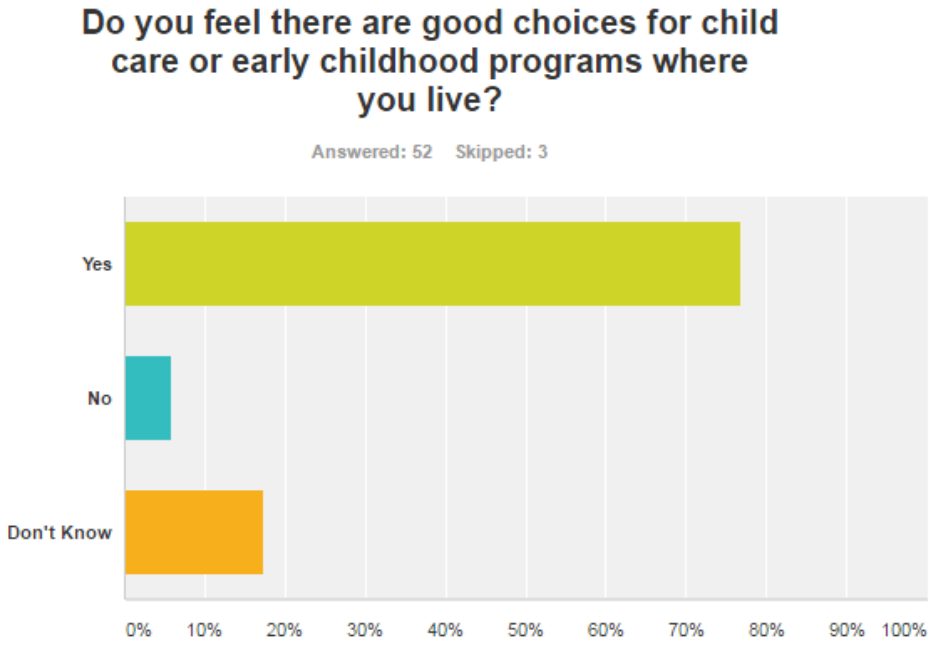
Please explain your response for question 10. Check answer and reason...

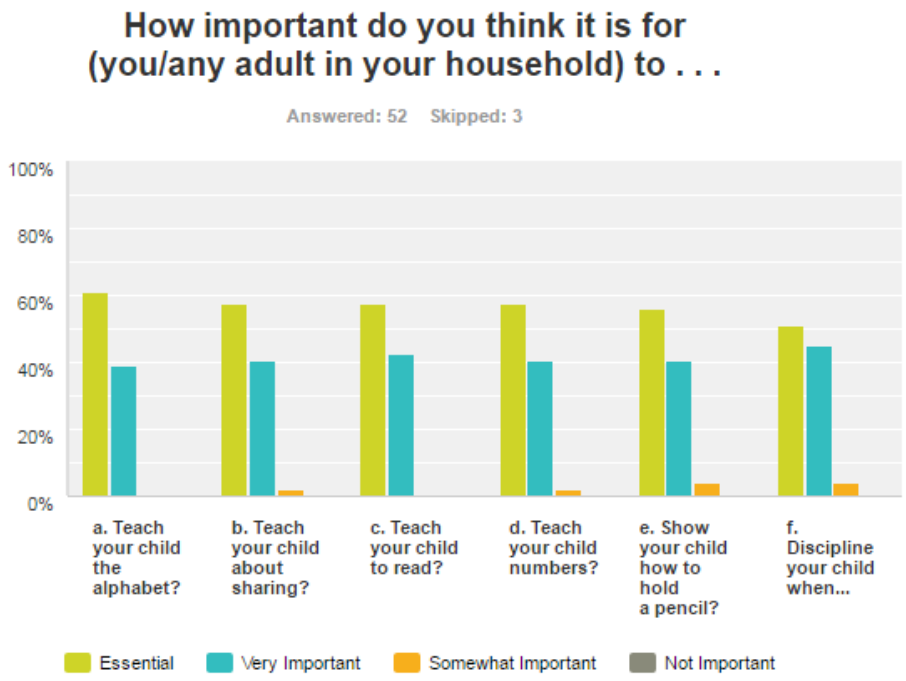
Answered: 45 Skipped: 10

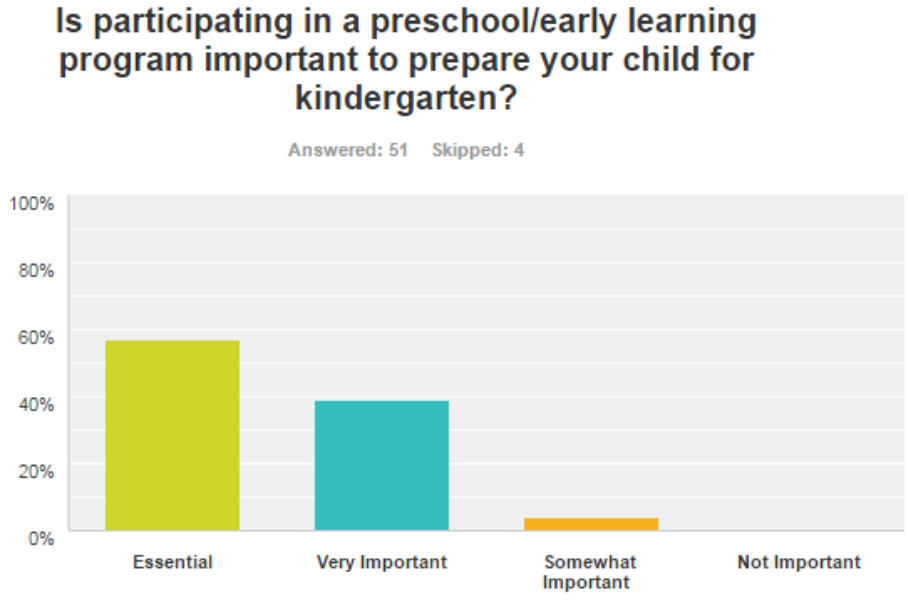


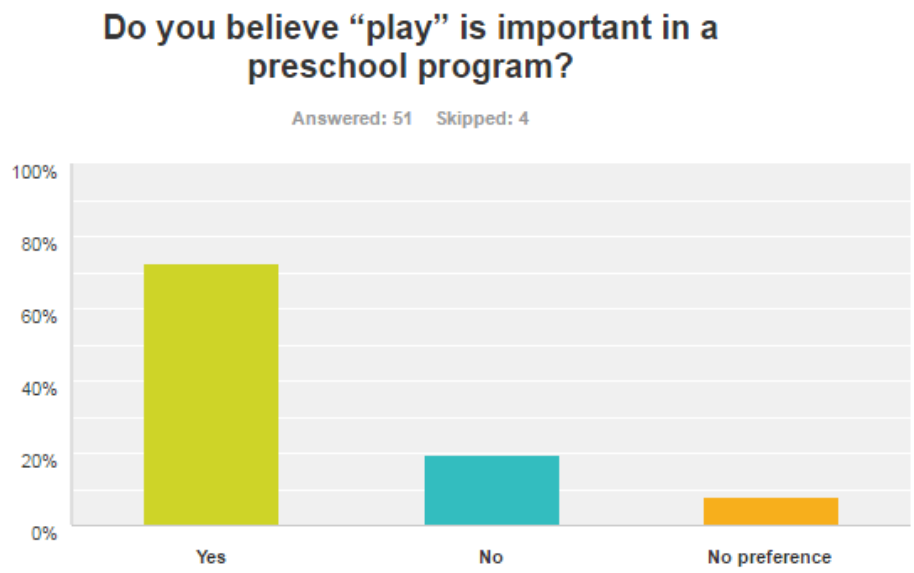
Answer Choices	Responses	
a. If yes, why?	57.78%	26
Academic skills	46.67%	21
Social skills	33.33%	15
Child care	37.78%	17
Other/explain_____	17.78%	8

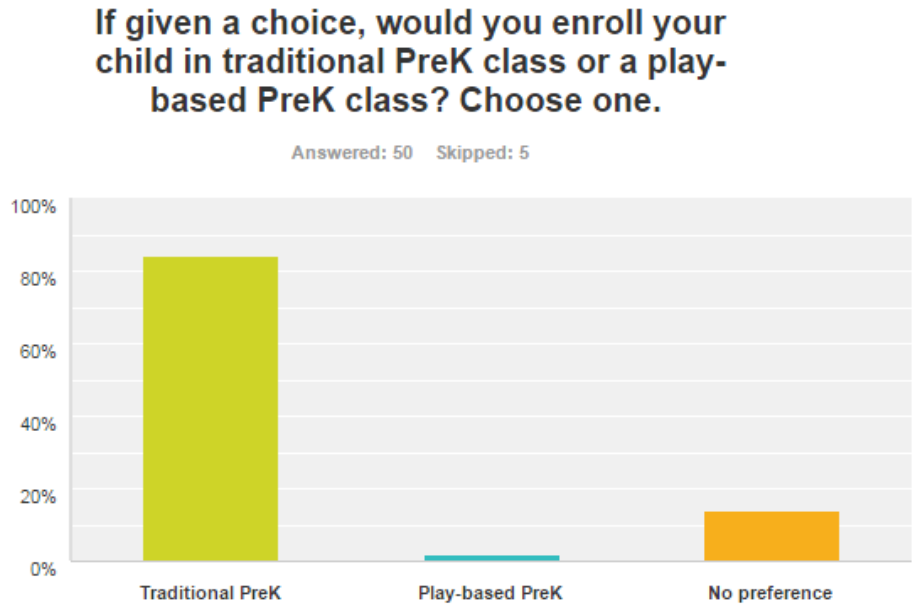

What is the main reason your household wanted a care program for this child in the past year? Mark ONE only.
Answered: 49 Skipped: 6
To provide care when a...
To prepare child for...
To provide cultural or...
To make time for running...
Some other reason
Did not have care in the...
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%


Do you feel there are good choices for child care or early childhood programs where you live?
Answered: 52 Skipped: 3
Yes
No
Don't Know
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%


How important do you think it is for (you/any adult in your household) to . . .
Answered: 52 Skipped: 3
100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
a. Teach your child the alphabet?
b. Teach your child about sharing?
c. Teach your child to read?
d. Teach your child numbers?
e. Show your child how to hold a pencil?
f. Discipline your child when...
Essential
Very Important
Somewhat Important
Not Important


Is participating in a preschool/early learning program important to prepare your child for kindergarten?
Answered: 51 Skipped: 4
100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
Essential
Very Important
Somewhat Important
Not Important


Do you believe “play” is important in a preschool program?
Answered: 51 Skipped: 4
100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
Yes
No
No preference


If given a choice, would you enroll your child in traditional PreK class or a play-based PreK class? Choose one.
Answered: 50 Skipped: 5
100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
Traditional PreK
Play-based PreK
No preference

Appendix H

The Poll Data Relevant to Needs Assessment

Turning Results by Question

Session Name: Park Heights 12-15-2015 9-02 PM
Created: 12/16/2015 5:57 PM

1.) In which community do you live? (multiple choice)

	Responses (percent)	(count)
Arlington	6.49%	5
Clyburn/Green Spring/Levindale	5.19%	4
Langston Hughes	5.19%	4
Lucille Park	0%	0
Park Circle	10.39%	8
Park Lane	9.09%	7
Pimlico Good Neighbors	6.49%	5
Towanda-Grantley	3.90%	3
Woodmere/Hilltop	14.29%	11
Other	38.96%	30
Totals	100%	77

2.) Which option below best describes you? (multiple choice)

	Responses (percent)	(count)
Parent of kids living in my household	34.48%	30
Grandparents of kids living in my household	10.34%	9
Guardian of kids living in my household	1.15%	1
Service provider of children	4.60%	4
Interested community member or leader	37.93%	33
Other	11.49%	10
Totals	100%	87

3.) How many children in your home attend K-3 in Baltimore city or charter school? (multiple choice)

	Responses (percent)	(count)
1	25.88%	22
2	9.41%	8
3	1.18%	1
4	1.18%	1
5	0%	0
6	0%	0
7	0%	0
8	0%	0
9	0%	0
None	62.35%	53
Totals	100%	85

4.) How old is the youngest child living in your home? (multiple choice)

	Responses (percent)	(count)
1	8.33%	7
2	4.76%	4
3	2.38%	2
4 or 5	15.48%	13
6 or 7	10.71%	9
8 or 9	5.95%	5
10 or 11	3.57%	3
12, 13 or 14	4.76%	4
15, 16 or 17	4.76%	4
None or none under 17	39.29%	33
Totals	100%	84

5.) Which option below best describe your selected child care facility? (multiple choice)

	Responses (percent)	(count)	% when we drop option 6
Home-based (licensed)	4.35%	4	14.30%
Home-based (non-licensed)	5.43%	5	17.90%
Home-based (not sure if licensed or not)	1.09%	1	1.40%
Center-based (Park Heights)	14.13%	13	**46.40%**
Center-based (outside of Park Heights)	5.43%	5	17.90%
I don't currently use child care	69.57%	64	
Totals	100%	92	

6.) In terms of child care, rank the following in order of importance: (priority ranking)
REVOTE BELOW

7.) In terms of child care, rank the following in order of importance: (priority ranking)
Note: top rank received 5 points, next rank, 4 pts, and so on to last rank at 1point.

	Responses (percent)	(count)
Location/Transportation	16.85%	203
Accredited/License	19.17%	231
Family Relationship	11.70%	141
Curriculum	15.68%	189
Hours of Operation	11.70%	141
Affordability	24.90%	300
Totals	100%	1205

8.) In your neighborhood, how would you rate the pre-K options to choose from? (multiple choice)

	Responses (percent)	Responses (count)	% when we drop option 4
Excellent, there is more than one good pre-K	14.61%	13	25.50%
Good, there is at least one good pre-K	25.84%	23	**45.10%**
Poor, there are no good pre-K options	16.85%	15	29.40%
Not sure	42.70%	38	
Totals	100%	89	

9.) How important is it for an organization like the Bainum Family Foundation to invest time, energy and money in making early childhood options better in your neighborhood? (multiple choice)

	Responses (percent)	Responses (count)
Very important	93.41%	85
Somewhat important	4.40%	4
Not very important	1.10%	1
Not important at all	1.10%	1
Totals	100%	91

10.) How would you rate the early childhood center or child care center options you have to choose from? (multiple choice)

	Responses (percent)	Responses (count)	% when we drop option 4
Excellent, there is more than one good child care center	7.95%	7	12.30%
Good, there is at least one good child care center	38.64%	34	**59.60%**
Poor, there are no good child care center options	18.18%	16	28.10%
Not sure	35.23%	31	
Totals	100%	88	

11.) How important is it for an organization like the Bainum Family Foundation to invest time, energy and money in making child care options better in your neighborhood? (multiple choice)

	Responses (percent)	Responses (count)
Very important	90.59%	77
Somewhat important	5.88%	5
Not very important	1.18%	1
Not important at all	2.35%	2
Totals	100%	85

15.) How likely are you to participate in a home visiting program? (multiple choice)

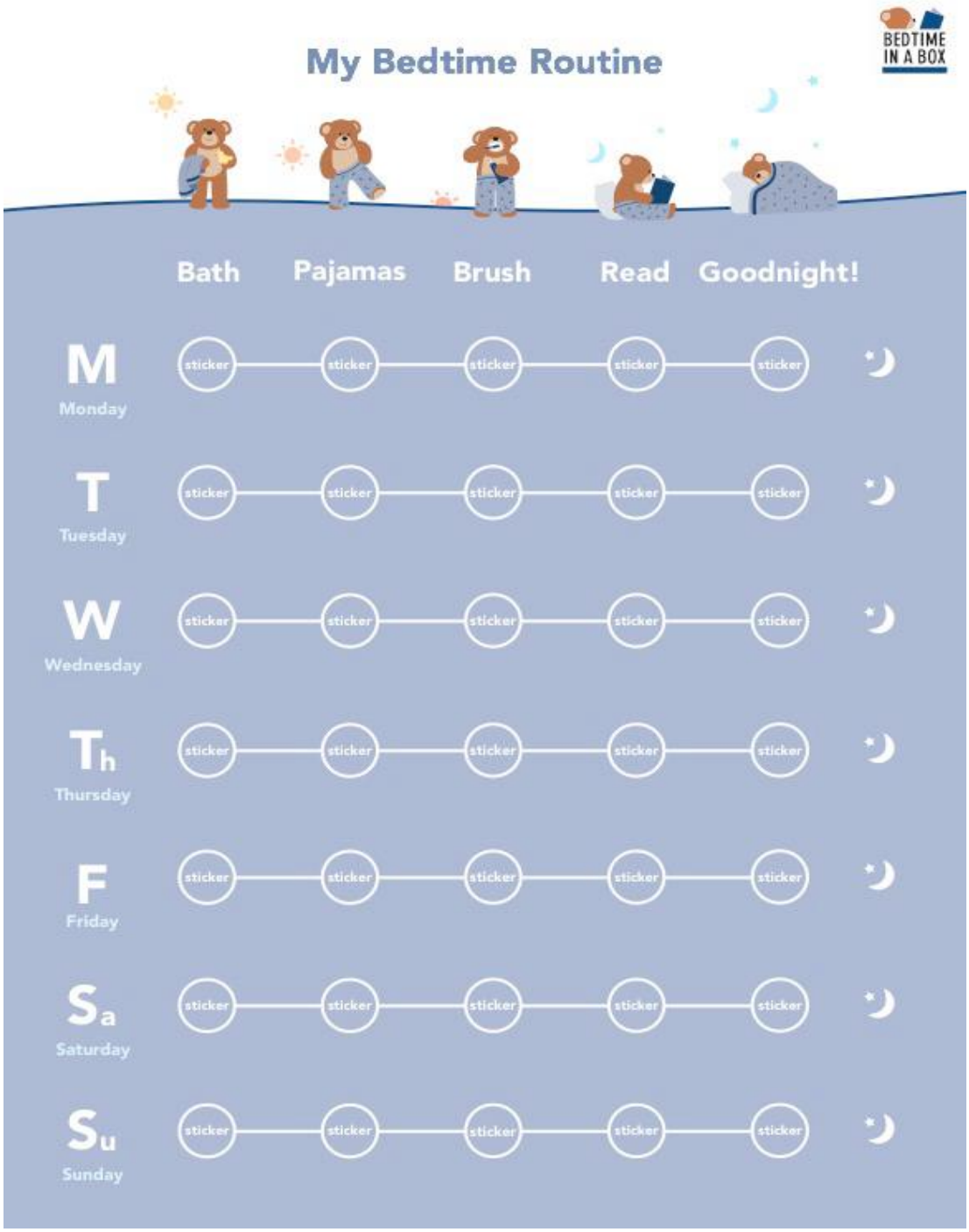
	Responses (percent)	Responses (count)	% when we drop option 5
Very likely	39.77%	35	**59.30%**
Somewhat likely	15.91%	14	23.70%
Not very likely	5.68%	5	8.50%
Not likely at all	5.68%	5	8.50%
Not applicable to my family	32.95%	29	
Totals	100%	88	

25.) Top Three Overall: If you had to decide where the Bainum Family Foundation invested time, energy and money to improve educational and health supports in Park Heights, which three (3) of these areas would you choose? (multiple choice)

	Responses (percent)	(count)
Pre-k	16.09%	42
Child care centers	18.39%	48
Prenatal health	6.13%	16
Mental wellness	14.18%	37
Home visitation	2.68%	7
After-school tutoring	19.16%	50
Summer enrichment	23.37%	61
Totals	100%	261

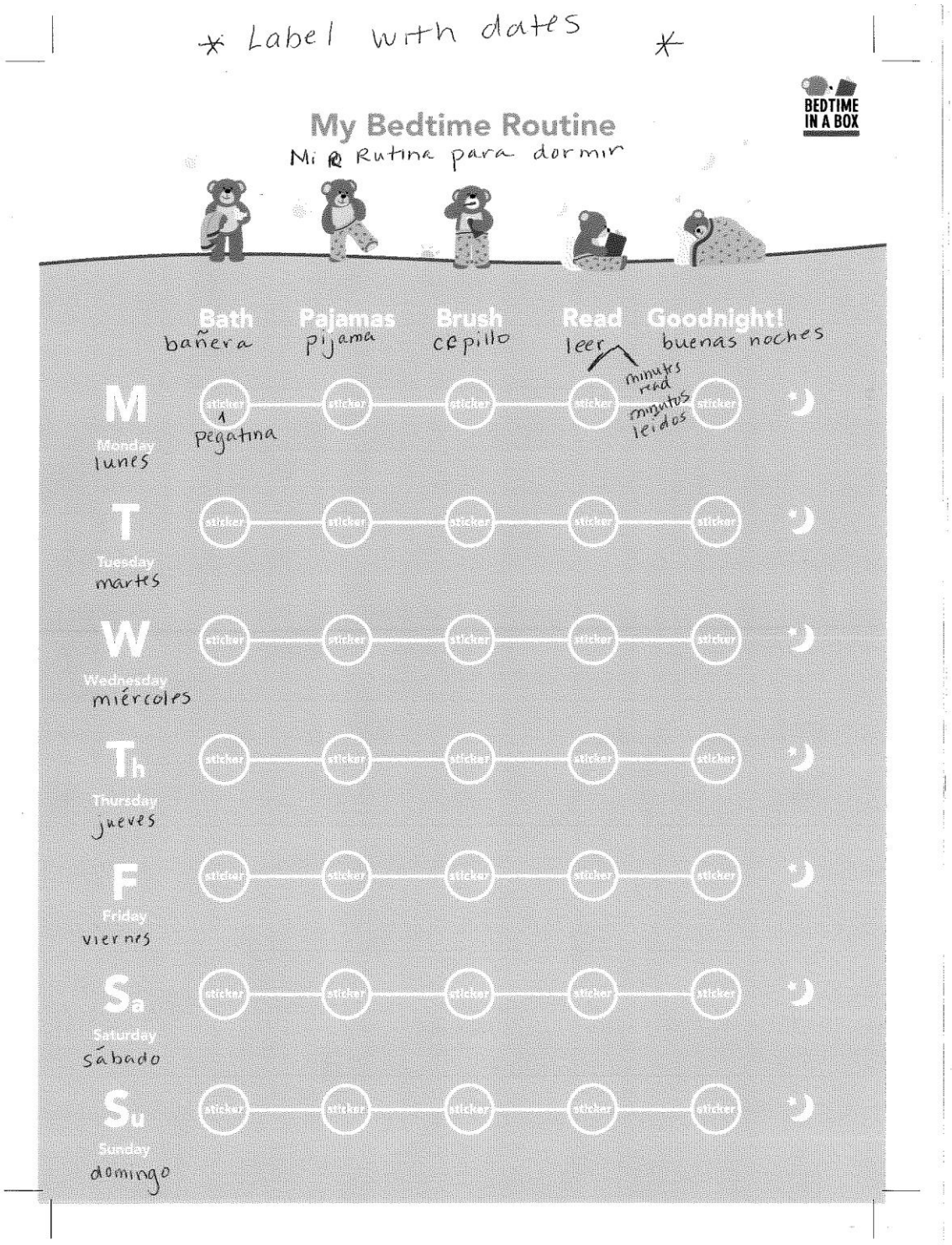
Appendix I

BiaB Checklist (English)



Appendix I

BiaB Checklist (Spanish – sent to developer for language changes)



Appenidix J

Bedtime Routine Overview

My Bedtime Routine

Bath

Begin bedtime each night at the same time with a bath. This is the perfect time to learn. Sing songs, practice letters and numbers, and tell stories. Don't forget to clean behind the ears! Use this time to talk about the day and learn.

Pajamas

Changing into a comfortable pair of pajamas will signal to your child it is time to go to bed. Help them when they are younger, and as they grow, build independence by having them change without your help.

Brush

Two minutes of brushing every night and every morning can prevent cavities and help your child's teeth stay brilliantly white. The light-up toothbrush will time the brushing, but you can also sing and count along.

Read

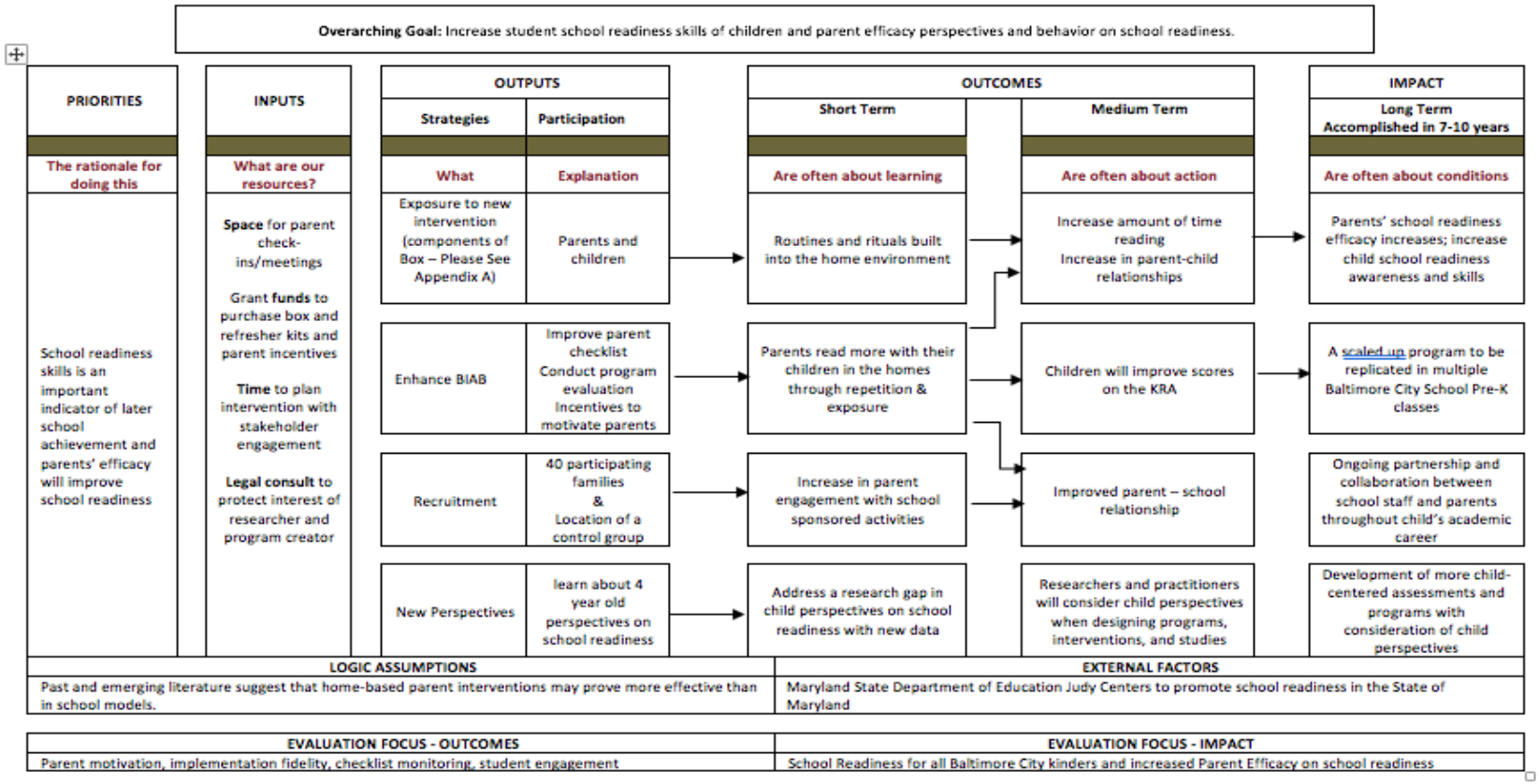
15 minutes of reading every night is all it takes to build a love of books. Have fun, discuss the pictures, ask questions, and use different voices for characters. Your child we learn from you, so make it interesting.

Good Night

Have a ritual for saying goodnight. A kiss, high five, hug, or a combination of all of these will signal it's time to sleep. Consistency is key. Plan ahead to go to bed at the same time each night.

Appendix K

Bedtime in a Box Logic Model



Appendix L

Data Collection Matrix

Fidelity Indicator	**Data Sources**	**Data Collection Tool**	**Frequency**	**Responsibility**
Following Routines *(quality of delivery & dosage)*	Routine Checklist	Checklist	Weekly	Felicia Jones
Parent Efficacy of School Readiness *(participant responsiveness)*	Multiple Surveys & Self-created questions	Survey Questions non-electronic	1x before intervention 1x after intervention	Felicia Jones
Increase Reading at Home *(quality of delivery)*	Routine Checklist	Checklist	Weekly	Felicia Jones
Awareness of Program Fidelity Implementation *(adherence & duration)*	Orientation & Check-In Attendance	Sign-In sheets	Onset of program & midway check-in	Felicia Jones & Jarrod Bolte
Increase School Readiness *(quality of delivery)*	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)	iPad version of PPVT protocol	1x before intervention 1x after intervention	Felicia Jones & Research Assistant
Parent – Child Relationships *(participant responsiveness)*	Multiple Surveys & Self-created questions	Survey Questions non-electronic	1x before intervention 1x after intervention	Felicia Jones
Child Perspective on Intervention and School Readiness *(participant responsiveness)*	Interview Questions	Ethnographic Interview	End of intervention	Felicia Jones

Appendix M

Parent Measures

Please create a Confidential Unique ID according to the directions below:

First & Last Letter of First Name	First & Last Letter of Last Name	Year of Birth (4 digits)
____ ____	____ ____	____ ____ ____ ____

Confusion, Hubbub, and Order Scale SF

Instructions: For each statement below, please **circle** a number between 1 and 4 to indicate how much each statement describes your home environment. Please use the following scale:

1 = Very much like your own home

2 = Somewhat like your own home

3 = A little bit like your own home

4 = Not at all like your own home

1. We are usually able to stay on top of things.	1	2	3	4
2. It's a real zoo in our home.	1	2	3	4
3. You can't hear yourself think in our home.	1	2	3	4
4. The atmosphere in our home is calm.	1	2	3	4
5. First thing in the day, we have a regular routine at home.	1	2	3	4
6. There is usually a television turned on somewhere in our home,	1	2	3	4

Matheny, A.P., Washs, T. D., Ludwig, J.L., & Philips, K. (1995). Bringing Order Out of Chaos: Psychometric Characteristics of the Confusion, Hubbub, and Order Scale. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 16, 429-444.

The Parenting Sense of Competence Scale

Instructions: Listed below are a number of statements. Please respond to each item, indicating your agreement or disagreement with each statement.

1. The problems of taking care of a child are easy to solve once you know how your actions affect your child, an understanding I have acquired.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly agree	Agree	Mildly agree	Mildly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

2. I would make a fine model for a new (parent) to follow in order to learn what she/he would need to know in order to be a good (parent).

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly agree	Agree	Mildly agree	Mildly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

3. Being a (parent) is manageable, and any problems are easily solved.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly agree	Agree	Mildly agree	Mildly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

4. I meet my own personal expectations for expertise in caring for my child.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly agree	Agree	Mildly agree	Mildly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

5. If anyone can find the answer to what is troubling my child, I am the one.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly agree	Agree	Mildly agree	Mildly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

6. Considering how long I've been a (parent), I feel thoroughly familiar with this role.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly agree	Agree	Mildly agree	Mildly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

7. I honestly believe I have all the skills necessary to be a good (parent) to my child.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly agree	Agree	Mildly agree	Mildly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Cutrona, C. E., & Troutman, B. R. (1986). Social support , infant temperament , and parenting self-efficacy : A mediational model of postpartum depression, *Child Development, 57,* 1507–1518.
Gibaud-Wallston, J. A. (1977). Self-esteem and situational stress: Factors related to sense of competence in new parents. (Doctoral dissertation, Ceorge Peabody College for Teachers, 1977). Dissertation Abstracts International, 39, 379B. (University Microfilms No. DDK78- 09936)

HOME SF

31. About how many children's books does your child have? Circle one:

- 10 or more books
- 3 to 9 books
- 1 to 2 books
- None

32. About how often do you read stories to your child? Circle One:

- Never
- Once a week
- Several times a year
- At least 3 times a week
- Several times a month
- Everyday

3. Do you or have you helped [child] with numbers?

4. Do you (or someone else) help [child] with the alphabet?

5. Do you (or someone else) help [child] with colors?

6. Do you (or someone else) help [child] with shapes and sizes?

7. How often does a family member get a chance to take child on any kind of outing?

8. How often has a family member taken or arranged to take child to any type of museum?

9. Does child have the use of a CD player, tape deck, or tape recorder, or record player at home and at least 5 children's records or tapes?

Por favor crear un ID único confidencial según las instrucciones a continuación:

Primer & última letra del primer nombre	Primer & última letra del apellido	Año de nacimiento (4 digitos)
____ ____	____ ____	____ ____ ____ ____

Confusión, Bullicio, y orden escala SF

Instrucciones: Para cada declaración a continuación, por favor circule un número entre 1 y 4 para indicar cuánto cada declaración describe su entorno familiar. Por favor use la siguiente escala:

1 = mucho como en tu propia casa

2 = algo como en tu propia casa

3 = de A poco como en tu propia casa

4 = no como en tu propia casa

1. Somos generalmente capaces de mantenernos al tanto de las cosas.	1	2	3	4
2. Es un verdadero zoológico en nuestro hogar.	1	2	3	4
3. No puede oírse a sí mismo ni pensar en su casa.	1	2	3	4
4. El ambiente en nuestro hogar es calmado.	1	2	3	4
5. Lo primero en el día, tenemos una rutina en casa.	1	2	3	4
6. Generalmente hay un televisor encendido en alguna parte en nuestra casa.	1	2	3	4

Matheny, A.P., Washs, T. D., Ludwig, J.L., & Philips, K. (1995). Bringing Order Out of Chaos: Psychometric Characteristics of the Confusion, Hubbub, and Order Scale. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 16, 429-444.

El sentido de la crianza de los hijos de la escala de competencia

Instrucciones: A continuación son una serie de declaraciones. Por favor responda a cada artículo, indicando su acuerdo o desacuerdo con cada afirmación. below are a number of statements.

1. Los problemas de cuidar de un niño son fáciles de resolver una vez que sabes cómo tus acciones afectan a su hijo(a), una comprensión que eh adquirido.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Muy de acuerdo	De Acuerdo	Ligeramente acuerdo	Ligeramente Desacuerdo	Desacuerdo	Muy en desacuerdo

2. Yo haría un buen modelo para un nuevo (padre) aprender lo que él/ necesita saber para ser buen (padre).

1	2	3	4	5	6
Muy de acuerdo	De Acuerdo	Ligeramente acuerdo	Ligeramente desacuerdo	Desacuerdo	Muy en desacuerdo

3. Ser (padre) es manejable, y los problemas se resuelven fácilmente.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Muy de acuerdo	De Acuerdo	Ligeramente acuerdo	Ligeramente Desacuerdo	Desacuerdo	Muy en desacuerdo

4. Me encuentro con mis propias expectativas personales por experiencia en el cuidado de mi hijo.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Muy de acuerdo	De acuerdo	Ligeramente de acuerdo	Ligeramente Desacuerdo	Desacuerdo	Muy en Desacuerdo

5. Si hay alguien que puede encontrar la respuesta a lo que está preocupando a mi hijo(a), soy yo el único.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Muy de acuerdo	De acuerdo	Ligeramente de acuerdo	Ligeramente Desacuerdo	Desacuerdo	Muy en Desacuerdo

6.Teniendo en cuenta cuánto tiempo he sido (padre), me siento familiarizado con este papel.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Muy de acuerdo	De acuerdo	Ligeramente de acuerdo	Ligeramente Desacuerdo	Desacuerdo	Muy Desacuerdo

7. Honestamente creo que tengo todas las habilidades necesarias para ser un buen (padre) para mi hijo(a).

1	2	3	4	5	6
Muy de acuerdo	De acuerdo	Ligeramente de acuerdo	Ligeramente Desacuerdo	Desacuerdo	Muy Desacuerdo

Cutrona, C. E., & Troutman, B. R. (1986). Social support , infant temperament , and parenting self-efficacy : A mediational model of postpartum depression, *Child Development, 57,* 1507–1518.
Gibaud-Wallston, J. A. (1977). Self-esteem and situational stress: Factors related to sense of competence in new parents. (Doctoral dissertation, Ceorge Peabody College for Teachers, 1977). Dissertation Abstracts International, 39, 379B. (University Microfilms No. DDK78- 09936)

Casa SF

33. Acerca de cuántos libros tiene su hijo(a) ? Circule uno:

- 10 o mas libros
- 3 a 9 libros
- 1 a 2 libros
- Ninguno

34. Aproximadamente cuanto lee historias a su hijo? Circule Uno:

- Nunca
- Una vez a la semana
- Varias veces al año
- Por lo menos 3 veces a la semana
- Varias veces al mes
- Todos los días

3. usted ayudado a [niño(a)] con números?

4. Usted (o alguien mas) ayudado [niño (a)] con el alfabeto?

5. Usted (o alguien mas) ayudado [niño (a)] con colores?

6. Usted (o alguien más) ayudado [niño(a)] con formas y tamaños?

7. Con que frecuencia un miembro de la familia tiene oportunidad de llevar al niño(a) en cualquier tipo de excursión?

8. Con que frecuencia tiene un miembro de la familia la oportunidad de llevar El Niño(a) a cualquier tipo de museo?

9. Tiene El Niño el uso de un reproductor de CD, platina, registrador de cinta, o tocadisco en la casa y al menos 5 cintas Does child have the use of a CD player, tape deck, or tape recorder, or record player at home and at least 5 children's records or tapes?

Appendix N

Student Interview Transcription

Primary Code	Sub Code 1	Sub Code 2	Sub Code 3
Literacy & Language	Reading "I can learn sight words." "Uh, the books." "Sight, new sight words." "New letters." "Like ABCs."	Written Language "Like I keep on doing papers." "Like writing words."	
Hygiene	Bathtime "Um, washcloths." "I like it because they have, it has soap in it and the washcloths in it."		
Growing Up	New Experiences "I like kindergarten because I'm about to grow up." "Having a new teacher."		

	"Learn to something." " Playing with my friends."		
Feelings	Kindergarten "Happy" "Crying." "Next year just crying because I don't wanna go to school anymore."	Bedtime in a Box "Cause it makes me happy."	

Student Interview Questions

1. What excites you about going to kindergarten next year?
2. What scares you about going to kindergarten next year?
3. Do you think you're going learn anything new in kindergarten next year?
4. What was the best part about BiaB?
5. Would you want to keep doing BiaB every night?

Child 1: Black Female

Interviewer: Ok so the first question is, what excites you about kindergarten next year?

Child: Um, I like kindergarten because I'm about to grow up.

Interviewer: Ok, so getting older. That's exciting! And what scares you about kindergarten next year?

Child: Because when I like kindergarten and then when I grow up I can do whatever I wanna do.

Interviewer: Sounds good. So that's almost a question, uh answer, for question number one. So what scares you about going to kindergarten next year?

Child: Scares me means…

Interviewer: Like does anything frighten you or make you a little scared about going to kindergarten next year?

Child: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Like what? Wh-what's going to scare you? What do you think is gonna scare you about it?

Child: Kindergarten.

Interviewer: Ok. And do you think you're gonna learn anything new in kindergarten? Like what?

Child: Like ABCs.

Interviewer: Did you learn your ABCs this year? No, you didn't? But you're gonna learn them next year, right? Sounds good. And what was the best part about Bedtime in a Box?

Child: Um, washcloths.

Interviewer: The washcloths? Ok! And would you wanna keep doing Bedtime in a Box every night? Yes? Ok, sounds good. Thank you so much for talking to me! Ok, her answer was yes for the last question.

Child 2: Black Female 2

Interviewer: Ok so the questions are gonna be about kindergarten and Bedtime in a Box. So my first question is, what excites you about going to kindergarten next year?

Child: Because my mommy keep on taking me to school.

Interviewer: Ok so you're excited that you get to keep coming to school? Ok. Is it anything—well what scares you about going to kindergarten next year?

Child: 'Cause I like kindergarten.

Interviewer: Ok because you like—so that's the, that's the reason why you are looking forward to going. But is there anything that scares you about going to kindergarten next year? No? Ok great! And then my next question about kindergarten is, hold on. Do you think you're gonna learn anything new next year in kindergarten? Like what?

Child: Like I keep wearing dresses.

Interviewer: Ok, so what about learning something new? Like in school?

Child: I can learn sight words.

Interviewer: Oh you're gonna learn some more sight words? Think you're gonna learn anything else? Ok, like what?

Child: Like I keep on doing papers.

Interviewer: Ok, and doing papers. And what was the best part about Bedtime in a Box?

Child: Because Bedtime in a Box so you can bring it to school.

Interviewer: Ok but what do you like—remember the box that you got at home? What did you like about it?

Child: I like it because they have, it has soap in it and the washcloths in it.

Interviewer: Oh nice! That's cool. I th—I wouldn't have thought that it, I wouldn't have that you would say that. That's cool. And then, would you wanna keep doing Bedtime in a Box every night? Yes? Ok. She nodded her head 'yes'. Well thank you so much!

Child 3: White Female

Interviewer: So what excites you about going to kindergarten next year? Nothing is exciting about going next year? It can be about friends, it can be about your new teacher, it can be about learning, it can be about a new school. Nothing's exciting about it?

Child: Having a new teacher.

Interviewer: Oh having a new teacher. Ok. Sounds good. So what scares you about going to kindergarten next year? It can be about, like I said, teachers and friends. It can be about reading or math. Nothing scares you about next year? You don't wanna answer that question? You don't know? Ok! What, what's something that you're gonna learn next year? Something new, that you think about. What, what could you learn new next year?

Child: Like writing words.

Interviewer: Writing words. Ok, writing words! That's a good one. And what did you like best about Bedtime in a Box?

Child: Uh, the books.

Interviewer: The books. That's my favorite part too. And then my last question for you, Mace, is, would you wanna keep doing Bedtime in a Box every night? Yes. Ok, well thank you again! I appreciate your help! Thank you.

Child 4: Male Interview (White Female 2, same participant as Child 3: White Female)

Interviewer: [laughs] No, it's just recording. So I'm gonna ask Macy some questions and I just want you to listen, ok? Alright. Macy, what excites you about kindergarten next year?

Male child: How excited she is?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. [inaudible 00:17] wait for her to answer.

Female child: Playing with my friends.

Interviewer: Playing with your friends? That's a good one! Um, what scares you about kindergarten next year? Is anything gonna be a little scary for you? Like what?

Child: I don't know.

Interviewer: You don't know yet, but something's gonna be scary, but you're just not sure what it's gonna be. That's ok! And then, do you think you're gonna learn anything new next year in kindergarten? Are you, did you learn any things in pre-K? You did? Ok so do you think you're gonna learn anything new in kindergarten next year? And it can be anything. Hmm?

Child: It can be good.

Interviewer: Ok it's gonna be good. But do you know what's gonna make it good? Like anything new in kindergarten? You don't know yet? But you do think, but you think you're gonna, uh, learn something new?

Child: Yes.

Interviewer: Ok! So she thinks she's gonna learn something new. Ok now this is about Bedtime in a Box. What was your favorite part about Bedtime in a Box?

Child: I like the books.

Interviewer: The books? Ok. And would you wanna keep doing it every day? Bedtime in a Box every day? Yep.

Child: [inaudible 01:43]

Interview: Ok, well. The answer, she nodded 'yes' for she wants to do it every night.

Child 5: Latin Male

Interviewer: So like I said, I'm gonna ask you some questions about, um, about kindergarten. And about, um, Bedtime in a Box. Ok? So, question number, so it's gonna be five, six, five questions. And the first one is, what excites you about going to kindergarten next year?

Child: Next year just could be happy because just [inaudible 00:37] when I get home and then why, why, when first I go to bedtime.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Child: [inaudible 00:45] my box something.

Interviewer: Mm.

Child: And there, then I put my things on there. [inaudible 00:53]

Interviewer: Ok. And then my next, um, what scares you about going to kindergarten next year? What scares you about kindergarten next year?

Child: Um, I think last year scares me…

Interviewer: About next year. About kindergarten. What scares you about kindergarten? You wanna come back to that one?

Child: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. And then, the next question is, what, do you think you're gonna learn anything new in ne—um, in kindergarten next year?

Child: Yeah.

Interviewer: What do you think you're gonna learn there?

Child: Learn to something. To my teacher.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Child: And he said I do a really good job.

Interviewer: [Pledge of Allegiance comes on over the loud speaker] Ok, we gotta pause real quick. Ok. And what was the best part of Bedtime in a Box? When you got the little box at home, like what was the best part of it?

Child: The best part of it is [inaudible 02:33]

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Child: Because [inaudible 02:41] touch and make a mess.

Interviewer: [laughs] And then do you wanna keep doing Bedtime in a Box every night?

Child: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah. Ok! Well let's go back to your other question. What scares you about kindergarten next year?

Child: Next year just crying because I don't wanna go to school anymore.

Interviewer: Oh you mean, you mean you wanna cry when you go to school? Well John, I really thank you for your time! And, um, I'll talk to you later!

Child: Yeah.

Interviewer: Happy graduation!

Child 6: Black Male

Interviewer: Ok what excites you about going to kindergarten next year?

Child: Good!

Interviewer: Good? Well what is exci—what's good? What's gonna be good about it?

Child: This is my cousin. This is my cousin.

Interviewer: Ok! Family. Ok so what excites you about going to kindergarten next year? What's gonna be good?

Child: Happy!

Interviewer: What's gonna be good about it?

Child: Playing.

Interviewer: Playing. And what else?

Child: Teaching.

Interviewer: And teaching? Ok! What scares you about going to kindergarten next year?

Child: Crying.

Interviewer: Crying. You wanna cry? What do you think will make you cry?

Child: I don't know.

Interviewer: You don't know? Ok. Do you think you're gonna learn anything new in kindergarten? Like what?

Child: Sight, new sight words.

Interviewer: New sight words. Ok. Anything else?

Child: New letters.

Interviewer: New l—oh new letters. Ok! And then, what was the best part about Bedtime in a Box?

Child: [inaudible 01:01]

Interviewer: Huh?

Child: [inaudible 01:03]

Interviewer: You don't know? Do you think you wanna keep doing Bedtime in a Box every day? You do wanna keep doing it? Why do you wanna keep doing it every day?

Child: 'Cause it makes me happy.

Interviewer: It makes you happy? Sounds good! Well I'll let you go.

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Early childhood education, child-care quality, pre-K policy
- Young children's school readiness
- Low-income families, children at-risk
- Parent engagement and involvement

CURRENT POSITION

2018 Director – Education Programs, Martha's Table, Washington, DC

EDUCATION

2018 **Ed.D**, Education- Urban Education, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

2010 **M.S.,** Special Education – Mild Moderate Disabilities, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

2008 **B.S.,** *Family Science*
University of Maryland,
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RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2005 - 2006 *Undergraduate Research Assistant*
Department of Public Health, The University of Maryland, College Park, MD

2015 - 2018 *Ed.D. student*, School of Education, Johns Hopkins University
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STUDENT MANUSCRIPTS IN PROGRESS

Jones, F. & Jeon, L. (in preparation). Bedtime in a Box: A worthy parent intervention to address the school readiness Planned submission to *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*.

PRESENTATIONS

Francis, C., & **Jones, F**. (2015, May). *A Model for Comprehensive Early Childhood Services: The Judy Centers in Baltimore City.* Poster presentation in the Virginia Head Start Association Conference, Head Start, Fredericksburg, VA.

GRANTS

Mindfulness Room in the Public School. Park Heights Renaissance, Baltimore, MD. $1,000 (05/30/2017; Role: grant writer)

Judy Center Grant. Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore, MD. $330,000 (7/1/17-6/30/18; Role: grant preparer & grant manager)

CERTIFICATIONS

2018	Urban Superintendent Academy, Howard University/AASA
2015	Emerging Leader, Princeton AlumniCorps
2011	Social Emotional Foundations of Learning, Trained Facilitator
2009	Highly Qualified Special Educator, MD State Department of Education
2009	Highly Qualified Early Childhood Educator, MD State Department of Education